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THE  
INNER LIFE OF CHRIST,

*AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL  
OF MATTHEW.*

BY  
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# “THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF.”

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## LXVIII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art light, and in thee is no darkness at all. May we walk in the light as thy children, as children of the day, called to thy glory and called to thy service, and capable of rendering thee continual praise. May we know the high meaning of our being, may none of its lower aspects tempt us downward, may every impulse of the soul be toward thyself, and our daily yearning be for the opening of the temple gate. We are at rest in the sanctuary, we are quiet in God's house ; this is God's acre for the living, not for the dead—may we be here planted as living trees and as blooming flowers, made glad by every vernal glance and breeze of Heaven, and in the time to come do thou satisfy thyself with our fruits, and transplant us into the upper garden. Here may we see the inner beauty ; in this place may we hear the inner music ; whilst we tarry in our Father's house, may our Father's blessing fill to overflow our desirous hearts.

We have come with our weekly song ; it is of mercy and not of judgment, for wherein there has been judgment it has been swallowed up of love—therefore shall our song be of love and mercy, pity and care, heavenly patience and almighty protection, and high above all other notes shall be heard our acclaim because of thy tender mercy. We have walked in and out safely because thine hand has been laid upon us. No lion has been in our way, nor any ravenous beast gone up thereon, because thou hast redeemed us from all fear. We have seen the cross, and that has made us glad ; we have beheld the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and in his sight all other sights have perished. After this we can look at nothing that is little : we are transfigured by its power, we are emancipated by its grace.

We have come with our weekly confession, but thou dost meet us with eternal forgiveness, because we come to the cross and speak the all-pre-vailing Name. Do thou come to us according to the necessity of each heart, and rule over us with the sweet sovereignty of love ; draw us by the tender compulsion of grace, give our souls a heavenly setting, and by

mighty yet tender stress may they be drawn upwards in every aspiration and every thought.

Thou hast surrounded us with temptation, thou has poured down thy floods upon the roof of our life, and thou hast caused many things harmful to us to test the strength and security of our foundation. Thou hast not spared the whirlwind, a great raging storm has sought out every weak place in our life-house—yet hast thou preserved us, thou hast given unto us deliverance, and in our mouth this day is a noble psalm of noble praise. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, it is because his compassions fail not that we are now in his house, and that our hearts are now in Heaven. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

We ask thee to comfort us when our distress is keenest, put into our hands the keys of gates for which there is no other opening. We ask thee to accompany us up the hill, that in thy society we may forget its weariness. We put our whole life into thine hand ; we look back upon it and we have filled it with shame, but thou hast filled it with grace : we look forward to its years yet unborn, and we meet every one of them in the strength and love of Christ. We are well when Christ is with us, the soul is glad in the Saviour's keeping—there is no night in the soul in which he shines in all the tenderness of his veiled glory, nor is there any fear in the heart that is pervaded and penetrated by his holy love. This is our desire that so it may be—we thus speak to thee in words which do not express all our meaning, but thou hearest the sighing of the heart and thou knowest the desire for which there is no speech. Receive our utterances of praise for mercies given, for protection vouchsafed, for travelling mercies, for home comforts, for family delights, for commercial success, for trials well borne, and for afflictions sanctified.

Put around us all thy strength, and may we feel its gentle pressure, and rejoice that our security is not human but divine. Amen.

### Matthew xvi. 13-23.

13. When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi (the ancient Leshem), he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am ?

14. And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist ; some, Elias ; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15. He saith unto them, But (the decisive moment !) whom say ye that I am ?

16. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon (obedient hearer) Bar-jona (son of oppression) : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will

build my church ; and the gates of hell (Hades, or kingdom of death) shall not prevail against it.

19. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

21. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes (a general conspiracy), and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22. Then Peter took him (seized him from behind) and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee.

23. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence (a trap) unto me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

### CHRIST'S PERSONALITY DEFINED.

CHRISTIAN history takes a new departure from this point. We now come more closely than ever upon the spirit and purpose of Christ's life and work. We have passed through the porch, and now we are about to enter the inner sanctuary.

Jesus Christ here puts a direct question to his disciples. The time had come for putting it, and it was his place to propose the vital inquiry. He seems to say to his disciples, " You have seen much work, now tell me what is thought of the worker. The doctrine and the miracle ought to have had some effect upon the minds of the people ; what is that effect ? I have left the public very much to form their own opinion—to what conclusion concerning me have they come ? I have treated you and the community in general as I treated John the Baptist when he sent two of his disciples to ask me if I was the Christ, or whether they were to look for another. You remember my reply : I said to them, ' Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see ; ' and then I pointed out to them the miracles which I had done, and the supreme, sublime miracle that the poor have the Gospel preached unto them ; and I left the imprisoned herald to form his own opinion regarding my authority and my qualifications. It is in this way that I have treated you ; I have delivered to you no lectures concerning my deity, divinity, personality ; I have gone in and out amongst you, speaking the word and doing the mighty

deed, and now the time has come when I may fitly ask you what is the result of it all—*Who am I?*

The answer of the disciples, when the question related to the public, was prompt, and not wholly satisfactory. The public had come to respectful conclusions regarding Jesus Christ. “Some say thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” There is no mention of Beelzebub in that report of the public impression. It was a respectful reply, because the public had formed a respectful opinion. It was also historical : John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias—this man is connected with the historical and heroical past, he is a grand man : this is no common claim. Behind this fine porcelain there burns a marvellous fire ; if we have to name him we will accord him an appellation that has about it the saintliness of devotion or the nobility of heroism. The opinion was conflicting yet unanimous. The people were not certain whether it was the Baptist or Elias or Jeremias or one of the prophets, but it was certainly some great man.

Jesus Christ having heard how he was regarded by the general public, brought the question nearer home. He had a subtle method of advancing upon the heart. Really his concern was not so much about the public impression as about the effect which had been produced upon the minds and hearts of those who had been nearest to him all the time. Said he, “But whom do ye say that I am ?” The original is emphatic : “But ye—whom say ye that I am ?” The Church should always have a more distinct opinion than the world. If there are two voices about Christ, the inner voice should be louder, clearer, nobler than the outer voice. There should be no difficulty whatever in distinguishing between the man who has been a long time intimate with Christ, and any man who is simply looking upon his history from an outside standpoint. Unction should be in the voice of the one, manifold music should be involved in the one utterance and should pronounce itself in many a happy and suggestive tone. Judgment begins at the house of God, not the judgment of denunciation alone, but the judgment of true-hearted criticism. If we are uncertain about Christ, what wonder that we make an uncertain impression upon the public mind ? The fire at the centre of the earth is hotter than any other fire. So in the church of Christ there should be an all-solving, all-fusing ardour of conviction.

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That conviction was sublimely represented in the answer given by Simon Peter. Instantly, with the suddenness of lightning, and yet with the graciousness of light, he said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” He was never so great a man before, nor has he ever been a greater man since he returned that infinite reply. Simon Peter was transfigured by his own answer : he was no longer a meanly-clad fisherman—the fire burned through his clothes : he was the tabernacle of the indwelling God. Never man spake like this man at that moment of his utterance. We know what it is to have a thought in us which transfigures the face and makes the countenance shine with unearthly lustre. The great speaker is always surprised by his own utterances, and suddenly there falls upon him an all-transfiguring fire from Heaven—the very flesh is a new flesh, and every pore of it an outlet for the inner light. Could we have seen Peter then, we should have seen him at his best—he has never been the same since. Some moments in life can never be repeated. There are some firsts which have no seconds, there are voices which seem to have no echoes—once for all their ineffable music rolls itself over the welcoming spaces, and it can never be repeated.

Yet in that very hour Simon Peter was not only transfigured, he was *humbled*. Beyond a certain line we cannot be allowed to go. Jesus Christ said to him, “Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona,”—why? Because of wit, genius, cleverness, superiority of mental energy? Nothing of the kind. But blessed art thou because this is not an answer of thine own suggestion, nor art thou repeating what any book has taught thee, nor art thou saying in thine own words what flesh and blood hath thought or conceived. This is nothing but the voice of the divine in the human : this is a revelation of God, this is an announcement from the skies—thou hast this treasure in earthen vessels, the excellency of the power is of God and not of thee. So lest the little trumpet should be proud of its own blast, Christ took it and held it up and said, “It was God’s breath that startled thee into the energy of that grand music.” Thus gently are we chided, rebuked in the midst of blessing, kept right in the very hour of our inspiration, and brought down from the mountain to be told that we should never have ascended so high but for the directing eye and the protecting hand of God.

Not only was Simon Peter transfigured by the indwelling presence, and humbled by the divinely granted and not humanly conceived revelation, but he was *exalted* as no man before him was ever lifted up. Humanly speaking, he surprised Christ into a new revelation. Jesus instantly handed Peter the keys. There is no difficulty in understanding the handing the keys to such a man in such a moment. Inspiration always carries the keys. No need of angry controversy or grammatical wordiness or critical inquiry into the exact meaning of the term, "the keys." This kind can only be understood by such minds as have almost realized the fulness and the elevation of inspiration itself. When you are inspired you have the keys. In your sublimest moods, when earth fades into a fleck hardly to be seen, and heaven crowds itself in noble fellowship upon your soul, the whole man is lifted up in an ecstasy divine. In that hour the church holds the keys. You do not hold the keys because of hereditary descent, or ecclesiastical relationship, or mechanical contrivance, or superior patronage—you hold the keys only so long as you realize the inspiration. And no man can take those keys from you ; everywhere the inspired man keeps the keys—in merchandise, in statesmanship, in philosophy, in adventure, in religious thinking, in Christian civilization, you cannot keep down the inspired man. It is as if Christ had said : "Thou art filled with the Holy Ghost ; this is oneness with God, this is pre-resurrection and pre-glorification—this is the very wisdom of heaven, and therefore I say unto thee, the keys are thine."

How Christ ennobled the occasion, and how Peter evoked the new revelation of Christ himself ! Christ never spake in this tone before. We sometimes surprise ourselves into new conditions, so that we become in a degree new selves and are a surprise to our own consciousness. Jesus Christ never made any occasion little. He always saw the best of every man, and never did he withhold from any human soul the meed of commendation which seemed to be due. He was all grace. Said he, "Ye are the light of the world, ye are the salt of the earth, ye are a city set on a hill. Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." If we have fallen below the occasion, the fault is in us and not in

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the Master. He now waits to see the proofs of our inspiration, and then he will not withhold the keys. We are not now inspired. We are clever, we are learned, we are respectable, we are orthodox, we are correct, we are negatively blameless ; but Inspiration, Enthusiasm, Ecstasy—these angels we have succeeded in strangling

From this point a new and closer fellowship is set up between Jesus Christ and His disciples. They were now bound together by a new secret ; one glimpse of the true light had been vouchsafed to the followers—the spiritual Christ had been revealed, and their nature was sanctified by a new inspiration ; a great expectation was created in them, and that great expectation was confounded by temporary shame. Mark the compression of the twenty-first verse : “ From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” The whole tragedy is crushed into that one inch of space. There is nothing more to be said. The cross is there, the bloody sweat, the mortal agony, the last gasp, the resurrection glory. He must go—not that he would go, but something more—he *must* go. The pressure of eternity was upon him, destiny beckoned him, supreme purposes gather themselves up into one grand appeal and claimed him.

He *must* suffer. We have regarded suffering as an accident, we have debased it into an affliction ; the heroic aspects of suffering and sacrificial outcomes of endurance and discipline we have forgotten or allowed to fall into disesteem. Jesus Christ saw that to get to any crown worth wearing, he must go through suffering, he must be killed. He talked to himself in plain language : every man who is going to undertake any solemn business in life ought to set it down before himself in the tongue in which he was born, in the plainest terms which that tongue can supply. Do not shut your eyes and then run into anything that may happen to turn up ; be master of the situation by *forecasting* it. Why should we be living a life of continual surprise as to trial and danger and affliction and pressure of various kinds ? Why not put it all down in cold ink, in plain words, and look at it as a fact, then live it, syllable by syllable, till the last tone

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has died upon the air which has listened to the whole frightful tragedy ?

Herein have we been blessed by the Almighty with sufficient knowledge of the future. We can tell that every one of us whose life is set in the right direction must go to Jerusalem, must suffer, and must be killed. Better for us to say all that to ourselves than be shutting our ears and closing our eyes and leaving the world to announce it in harsh and destructive tones. Commune with the tragedies that are about to befall you, charm from them their solemn secret ; by long, faithful, honest communion with the suffering which must befall life, you may be enabled to say in the long run, when the great encounter transpires, “ O death, where is thy sting ? ”

But Jesus not only spoke of his going to Jerusalem, of his suffering and his killing, but of his *resurrection*. We break off the story too soon, we have a long tale of complaint and reproach and pining and sadness, and too frequently is the sob too thick and strong in our throat to allow us to utter the word which would dissolve the cloud and make us men again. We talk too much of our discipline and suffering and slaughter, and say too little about the promised and inevitable resurrection. He who speaks the word “ death ” in the same sentence with the word “ resurrection ” will forget the overthrow in the exaltation.

Now we return to inquire how things stand with Peter, and we read this statement, “ Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee. But Christ turned and said, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me,” and Peter lost the keys—his binding and loosing power was taken from him in that instant ! He who was the blessed one a short hour since was ordered behind like a dog. The church lives on its own good behaviour ; you cannot live upon yesterday’s inspiration to-day. Every morning brings its own dew ; every morning must bring its own inspiration. To tell me that as a church you were inspired seven years ago, and therefore you are inspired to-day, is to speak irrationally if not wickedly. There is no inspiration seven years old or seven days old. God will depose the mightiest prince amongst us when that prince loses his inspiration. You cannot live upon the bread

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you ate twelve months ago—your prayer is, “ Give us this day our daily bread.” As with the body, so with the soul. The grace that ennobled your youth must be renewed day by day, or it will never mellow your old age.

So Peter fell. ‘Christ names us just as swiftly as we do our deed. “ Blessed art thou,” and Peter seemed to stand in the sun. “ Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”’ He had fallen back again to the human point ; he who had touched the divine glory fell into the dust trodden by the feet of men, and he was no longer either blessed with a benediction or entrusted with an authority.

Christ himself never fell below the divine. In no instance can you lay your finger upon a single line which contains the announcement that for one moment the great life faltered. Every other life hesitated, had its spasms of virtue, its sunshiny hours, its unfaithful actions, but I cannot find a line in all the Book in which Jesus Christ falls below the purpose with which he began his life. In such a consistency there ought to be some force of logic.

How subtle was this temptation. It came from a *friend*, from the first friend, the senior disciple—surely there could be no poison in such a suggestion ; it sprang from the *heart*, it was the utterance of tender compassion and protective sympathy. It came from a friend just honoured, from a man to whom the Lord had just granted the sublimest revelation. It was a generous thought—the intention was to spare suffering ; it was the voice of nature. Peter could not endure that his Lord should be so treated. Yet such a temptation fell impotently upon Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ’s fundamental principle was this : that *whatever was not sacrificial was Satanic*. A philosophy in a sentence, an inspiration in a breath ! Written in his heart, inscribed in his mind, higher than Pilate’s superscription engraven on his cross, was the profound philosophy

Whatever is not *sacrificial* is SATANIC.

## LXIX.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, when the anthem is sung in Heaven, may we all be there, no wanderer lost in all the great wilderness—the old man and the young child, may we all be where age is no more infirmity, where we shall spend an eternal summer in the smile of thy love. We bless thee for all uplifting ministries, for voices that penetrate the soul, for lights that make the darkness flee away as if in pain, for all comforts that give rest and hope to those that are ill at ease. We thank thee that thou art mindful of us every day—thou hast a gospel for every morning, and thy stars are eloquent with new voices every night. There is no searching of thy understanding ; thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Our little thought cannot reach to thy great sky —when we have climbed the upmost height thou dost lift the arch above us by the measure of the infinity, not to mock our strength, but to excite and inspire our prayer.

Thou hast set before us continually the cross of salvation because the cross of sacrifice. We see the uplifted Son of God, we behold him slain, we know that he was slain for our offences—we see his shame, his humiliation. They spat upon him, they took a reed and smote him in the face, they plaited a crown of thorns and crushed it into his temples. He was delivered for our offences ; we see the nails, we see the spear-thrust, we see the falling blood, we hear the panting weakness, we see the languid eye, we hear the “ It is finished ” of expiring love. He was wounded for our transgressions. We tarry awhile and behold the descending angel and the stone rolled away and the dead One rising in all the triumph of his indestructible power. We see him ascending and a cloud receiving him out of our sight. We listen, and down through the shattered air there rolls the music of the infinite cry, “ Worthy the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and honour and strength and blessing.” May we take part in that great thunder, for he was wounded for our transgressions. Amen.

### **Matthew xvi. 24-28.**

24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will (This “ will ” is more than a mere auxiliary) come after me, let him deny (empty) himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

25. For whosoever will save his life (the same as soul in the next verse) shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?

27. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels ; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

28. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death (an idiomatic expression, death being represented as a goblet full of bitterness) till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

### THE LAW OF CHRIST-FOLLOWING.

HOW differently this passage reads when taken in connection with all that has gone before, from what it is often made to appear when taken out of its setting and made the basis of a discourse upon the value of the soul. Jesus Christ did not deliver these words as a sermon to the people, or as his abstract statement of the soul's worth. He was not speaking about immortality, he did not probably bring within his purview the term soul as it is often theologically and evangelically construed. He himself was the Man spoken of, his own soul was the soul which he set against the whole world's value. Peter had just said to him, when he had spoken of going to Jerusalem to suffer and to be killed, " This be far from thee, Lord." Peter could not bear that his Lord should expose himself voluntarily to all the indignity and suffering which Jesus Christ detailed. The reply of the Saviour was based on the suggestion of Peter : " Peter bids me turn aside and escape the destiny which I came to fulfil. Taking short and narrow views, Peter tells me in effect to save myself—but I came into the world expressly to do this very work and no other. This is my soul, my life, this is the very reason of my incarnation. What then should I be profited if I gained the whole world and insulted the very genius of my being and perverted the destiny which I was born to realize ? "

Jesus Christ thus enters the sanctuary of great principles, and builds his life-house upon a rock. He looked to duty, and did not exercise his inventiveness in finding escapes from it. He kept his eyes steadily upon the beckoning Destiny, and whither it beckoned he went, and whosoever sought to hinder his advancement was Satan, and was ordered behind. To this end was Jesus

born, for this purpose he came into the world, and knowing this he hardened his face that he might go unto Jerusalem. There is a beautiful artistic completeness about the statement well worthy of note. Jesus said unto his disciples how that he must GO—so we read in verse twenty-one—in the twenty-fourth verse we read, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will COME”—that is completeness. First, he himself *must* go, and in the second instance, if any man *will* come.

This is the setting of the divine grace, in all the solemn order of providence and in all the outgoing of the divine decree. Sovereignty and spontaneity, lordship and liberty, destiny and voluntary acceptance or rejection of the great challenge. There is no asking, “Shall we go—will it not be well to go—ought we not to consider whether we should go?” The first tone shatters the air, “I MUST;” the next falls upon the air like a pleading gospel, like a gracious appeal, “If any man *will* come.” Would he then have gone, if no man had answered, “Lord, I will come?” Certainly. All this will come up again in the great audit : he is laying the basis and the foundation of judgment as well as the basis and foundation of redemption ; the cross would be set up, the sorrow, the suffering would be endured if no answering heart called him Lord and Saviour. Sin must be encountered, a divine answer must be given to a Satanic challenge and a human apostasy, and that divine answer could be given only through the medium of the tragic cross. What an *if* is this—“If any will come”—and yet in another mood he says, “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” Still, even in that bold declaration of sovereignty, it is drawing, not driving—alluring by the sweet compulsion of infinite love, and not scourging with iron rods or stinging scorpions.

Here is a great gospel invitation, the tender thing we call the love of God. Standing before us in figured image, it says, “If any man will come.” And yet the artistic completeness does not terminate there. Jesus said how he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer and be killed. “If any man will come after me let him take up his cross.” Here is the balance of the picture, this is the symmetry of the grand delineation—Jesus at the head yonder with a great cross crushing him, and the next man at an infinite

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distance with his lesser cross, and then the crowd, and then the great innumerable throng which no man can number, but every man with his own cross, every man going to be killed, but going to be killed *with Christ*, and therefore not to be killed at all !

The sublime reply of Jesus Christ to his generous but mistaken disciple contains a whole philosophy of life. Jesus Christ tells Peter that self-protection on narrow lines is self-destruction. He startled Peter by his paradox, “ Whosoever shall save his life will lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.” A shrewd Peasant, a marvellous thing for a carpenter’s Son, and nothing more, to have said ! Why, it turns upside down all ordinary human thinking. It reads like a contradiction and a self-collision of statement. Read it again. “ Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Can this be explained in words and defended by narrow logic ? It can only be understood by our most sanctified feeling, and realized and endorsed by actual personal experience.

Jesus Christ teaches that inward peace must never be sacrificed to outward ease. A lie might help us oftentimes to momentary rest, a great black falsehood might be the softest pillow sometimes on which for the time being to rest an aching head. Of what account is it if there be great outward peace, whilst the *heart* is at war with itself, whilst there is a scorpion in the inner nature, stinging the conscience and inflicting mortal pain ? Your plaudits cannot reach me with any measure of satisfaction if there be not an *inward voice* which attests that they are righteously bestowed—they fall upon me as foam flecks the rock it cannot penetrate. You might gather around your friend, pour upon him the billows of your approbation and applause, yet if his heart said to him, “ You have no right to this,” all those billows would chase one another to their destruction, and never enter the soul they were intended to bless. Contrariwise, you have also a profound truth—if there is really peace in your heart, any outside storm can have no effect upon you. Jesus Christ adds by suggestion that no motive is to be relied upon that is not drawn from a divine centre. Herein we fail so much—our motive has not *reach* enough. A man may be strong, and the stone which he may be attempting to remove out of his way be a real stumbling-block and ought to be removed,

but if he have not leverage enough his strength is wasted in vain endeavour. What we want in life is more *leverage*, and that needful leverage can be realized only when it has a heavenly purchase. Every motive that is not profoundly *religious* expires ere it accomplishes any work that is worth doing. No heroism can sustain itself up to the point of conquest that is not inspired by an adequate motive. What is the adequate motive of human life? God's sovereignty, God's love, human stewardship, a profound and gracious sense of responsibility, and an appreciation of those opportunities for fulfilling that responsibility which constitutes the very glory and dignity of our human life. You are, it may be, operating with too *small* a motive, your weapons are unequal to the war—there are no weapons equal to this contest that are not provided by the Almighty Captain of the fight.

Having heard Jesus Christ speak so, I say this is abstractly splendid ; if it be fanaticism it is of a royal type. I speak of Jesus Christ, therefore, in view of these answers, in no measured terms of applause ; but, say I, it is the coward's trick ; say I, this is very fine in the *abstract*, but you cannot *live* upon these principles. No doubt the principles are very noble, and there is about them a tender grace and something affectingly pathetic and pensive ; no doubt the Man's words are of a very high quality, but, I fear, words *only*. Now, Jesus Christ preached the sermon *himself*, and immediately stepped down out of the pulpit to give them practical application in his own life. *He lived his sermon.* Whilst we called it abstract, bordering on the fanatical, very noble in theory but impracticable in execution, he went out and *did* it. He is the same in every verse ; he never lowers his dignity, he never tampers with his purpose, he never makes the devil a bid that he may escape one pang of agony.

It is worth our while, therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, to enquire somewhat into this philosophy of his. How did it come that Jesus Christ could treat his own death in this way ? Read the passage in its wholeness and you will have the musical and effective answer. Your inquiry is about *death*, but Jesus Christ's speech was not about death *only*. You pause at an intermediate word ; you do not take in the whole heroism of the case. The very first point of darkness arrests you, and beyond it you see no outlook.

How did Jesus Christ treat the fact of his own death? He *recognised* it, he set it down as a *fact*; it never occurred to him to view it as a mere *possibility* or a high probability, or something that could be coloured, mitigated, or affected in his interest. Solemnly, clearly, unflinchingly he recognised the fact that he *must* go and be killed, but beside grim Death he set bright Resurrection, for he added, “and be raised again the third day.” “Weeping may endure for a night; joy cometh in the morning.” Death is temporary, Resurrection is eternal. Our light affliction is but for a moment, whilst we look at things not seen. Stop at death only, and the strongest man’s knees may well knock against each other in mortal terror. It is not *easy* to die: it cannot be *pleasant* to have the last interview, to put out a thin, wasted, trembling hand, and to say, in a hoarse whisper, “Good-bye.” It cannot be one of life’s *luxuries*. The Christian is called upon not to look at death only, but at *resurrection*; then in the “Farewell” is a subtle hint of reunion; in the tremulous “Good-bye” is an undertone that signifies “for a moment—at the other end of the valley we meet and part no more.” →

To resurrection he added *Glory*: “The Son of man shall come in the glory of his father with his angels.” To glory he added *kingdom*: “Till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” Now, how does death look? A frightened coward! Now the foe falls back into proper perspective: a shadow fleeing away in the chasing light of Resurrection, Glory, Kingdom, and all heaven ringing with acclaim of welcome and “Well done!” Death should never be looked at *alone*. You will frighten yourself if you look at death only; death is what its *surroundings* are. Surround it with farewell, lamentation, upbreaking of purpose, failure—surround it with grim, ghastly, heart-distressing attendants, and death will have its sting and the grave its victory; but surround it with Resurrection, Glory, Kingdom, Reunion, Fellowship, a land in which there is no night, no pain, no sea, no sickness, no sin, no enemy, and the soul says, “I have a desire to encounter the foe, that by overcoming him in God’s strength I may enter the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

Put death in all its right *perspective*, do not admit it to the front

line at all : put resurrection, glory, kingdom, heaven, triumph, in the front, and then you will see death fleeing away like a shadow chased by shafts of light. Then cometh the time when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and a tone of triumph and of mockery, of gracious delight and keen taunt, shall be heard : “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? Spoiled are both of ye, and your short reign comes to an inglorious end.”

Whilst all this applies to Jesus Christ, and was, in my opinion, in the first instance applied to himself, yet there is no reason why we should not accommodate it to our own life and to our own spiritual condition. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his *sight*? How would you view that proposition ? You shall have estates, lines of houses, mines of gold, and in exchange you must pay your *sight*. Will you conclude the bargain ? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his *hearing*? You shall have diamonds in multitudes that cannot be numbered, horses, chariots, men-servants and women-servants, and all the delights of the sons of men, but you shall pay your *hearing* in exchange for the bounty ; you shall never hear the human voice again, its eloquence, its song, its friendly word, its kind salute—what say you ? Does any man offer the price ? Would it be too much to pay ? What wonder, then, if Jesus Christ, reasoning *à fortiori*, should say, “ if you will not pay your *sight*, if you will not pay your *hearing*, in exchange for what the world has and can give, what shall it profit a man if he gain it all, and pay for it his *Soul* ? A soul paid for a month’s comfort, eternity ruined at the price of a day’s release from pain, Heaven paid in exchange for hell.” These are the ironies of life !

Such things are done every day by men who lay claim to some measure of intelligence. Within us there is a power against which our best impluses and noblest purposes contend in vain—they go down before its savage strength in utter helplessness, and are crushed by its iron heel with all the delight of satisfied malevolence. A wondrous battlefield is the human heart ! if a battle *that* may be called where the slaughter is all on one side and the prey falls into one hand. What is the remedy ? Crucifixion we must have. Our opportunity lies in the grand choice between being crucified by *others* and crucifying *ourselves*. Jesus Christ said, “ I

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lay down my life ; no man taketh it from me," except in a very secondary and temporary sense. *There* was his peace. " I lay down my life for the sheep. I have power to lay it down and to take it again." Crucifixion there must be in human life, as it is now debased and corrupted. The question is whether the crucifixion shall come from the *outside* and thus be mere murder, or whether it shall come out of the *will*, being done by the man himself, and thus be a great sacrifice. Such is the election now open to us—Murder or Sacrifice—to be slain by the enemy, or slay ourselves in Christ's society and on Christ's own cross. Suffering you cannot escape—the question is whether you will suffer from the outside or whether you will suffer sympathetically with the Son of God, and, knowing the fellowship of his sufferings, afterwards enter into the power of his resurrection.

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### SELECTED NOTES.

*Verse 19.*—To have the keys, is the sign of administrative authority : to bind and to loose, are figures for the exercise of such authority. The Apostles expected to be rulers in an earthly kingdom, and to have their acts sanctioned and supported by an earthly king. They were assured of a higher dignity than this. Not that the will of God would change to agree with their will ; but that their will would be brought to agree with his, and their agency be employed in teaching and governing.

*Verse 20.*—The verbal declaration would now only promote popular excitement.

*Verse 22.*—Peter supposed that his Lord was unduly discouraged, and elated by the commendation just received, he presumed to speak as if he were wiser ; thinking the predictions of the Old Testament made the death of Christ impossible. He had been named a *stone* for building, he now became a stone of hindrance. What was appointed and approved of God, was different from what was expected and desired by men, and it was much better. Christ spoke first of his own sufferings, and then of those of his disciples. He would not call them to death, till he could bid them in this also follow him.

LXX.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we hasten unto thee as men who are chased by a great fear or driven by the necessity of pain. There is no rest but in thyself, nor is there any healing for the sore heart but in the grace that is all sufficient. We fly unto thee ; yea, our hearts long with much yearning and pining of love to be for ever with the Lord. Place us where thou wilt, but be thou with us, and the place is heaven. We would never be without thee, we would have thee within us and without us, a crown upon the head, a fire in the heart, a voice filling the sanctuary of the whole life. Thou hast thyself given unto us this desire ; and, behold, whilst we cherish it, it purifies the soul and lifts up the whole nature towards the shining and holy heavens.

Jesus Christ thy Son is our Saviour, mighty to save, able to save unto the uttermost ; his mercy endureth for ever. He saved others, himself he did not save. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, and he is now in heaven, turning our poor prayer into his all-inclusive and all-prevalent intercession. Whilst we look upon Jesus Christ, there is no pain in the heart because of sin : the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin. Keep our hearts steadily fixed upon the cross, then shall the power of sin be broken within us, and out of our hearts there shall go one fervent desire to be like the Saviour himself. That we should have such thoughts as these is of the Lord's doing—no creations of our own are these. This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts : we see his hand herein, and herein do we hear his voice.

Continue to establish us in the love of truth ; may our desire be for the light that shineth from heaven, may our one purpose be to know thy will, and to do it with both hands earnestly, as men who have but one master to please and one will to consult.

For all thy mercy how shall we praise thee in song sweet and loud enough ? We fail in our praise as we fail in all other duty and service ; we cannot reach the height of our own gladness, it lies beyond all our power of speech ; we pray thee, therefore, to look into our hearts and to read there the songs that cannot be uttered. We have nothing that we have not received : thy name is upon all that we have enjoyed, yea thou hast spread our table, thou hast anointed our head with oil, thou hast caused our cup to run over, and what we have to fear, the valley of the

shadow of death, thou hast lighted up into a way leading homeward unto the Fatherland. Thou dost give us good desires ; thou knowest how these are besieged by the enemy as citadels that must be overthrown. Thou hast again and again given unto us the spirit of prayer, and yet have we been called to sore contest and fierce wrestling in the wilderness because the enemy would not allow our whole prayer to rise up unto heaven and bring down the answer from thence.

We are filled with a sense of our own mysteriousness : surely thou hast made us, and not we ourselves : we are the creatures of thine hand, and though we cannot understand ourselves, yet dost thou give us occasional light : not altogether hast thou withheld the illuminating beam. We have seen somewhat of ourselves, of our greatness and littleness, of our possibilities of union with thyself, and of the certainty of our disunion from thee. Show us thy truth, lead us into the mystery of thy grace, and wherever we are may the cross be the centre of our circle, and may all the light we work by stream from its head.

Thou seest us through and through, and there is nothing hidden from thee. How many days we have to spend upon the earth thou knowest ; our pulses have been numbered in heaven, the time of the lengthening of the shadow is set down in thy book ; we know nothing, for we are but of yesterday, and to-morrow is our great hope and our great fear. Help us to stand steadfastly in the confidence that God will do all things well.

Thou hast taken away from us the delight of our eyes, as if thou didst delight in our pain and find satisfaction in the greatness of our grief ; thou hast dug many graves under our hearthstone, thou hast caused the foundations of the house to tremble, and the roof has not kept out the storm—yet hast thou been merciful withal. Full of tenderness, thy solaces have followed the visitations of thy rod, and thy grace has been greater than our sin. Whilst we have been speaking of death thou hast been speaking of resurrection, and in the time of our sorest grief thou hast been preparing for us our gladdest surprises. Kindly look upon us all ; let thy glance have nothing in it of the fire of judgment, but all the warmth and beauty of a tender smile.

Direct those who are perplexed and sore driven and often ill at ease, to whom night brings no rest and the day brings double care ; show men that prosperity itself is an opportunity for humility and lowliness before God. Teach the rich man that his riches are but for a moment, and may at any time fall out of his hand and leave him poor indeed. Teach the poor man that his poverty may become a means of grace, and may lead him to the deepest considerations which can move and elevate human thought. Speak to the young comfortably and inspiringly, chastening their enthusiasm, sanctifying the passion of their fire, and make them servants of the altar.

Send out thy messages in all directions to-day. Give thine angels strength to carry them everywhere. Put into the tones of thy servants music that shall find and bless the heart. May the gospel of God our

Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Victim and the Priest, go forth, blessing all hearts, all homes, all lands. Be with those who are in trouble on the sea, with those who must travel that they may earn an honourable livelihood, with members of our families in far-away colonies and foreign lands—unite us all by the bonds of tender sympathy, and in all our hearts may there be the sure and confident hope of reunion in the land on high.

Oh that our prayer might be mighty,—that it might prevail in heaven,—that after its Amen there might come a great peace into the heart. Amen.

### Matthew xvii. 1-13.

1. And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
2. And was transfigured before them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
3. And, behold (introducing a greater marvel than even the metamorphosis) there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here : if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles (arbours, forest-tents, hermitages), one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
5. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them (as the Sheckinah overshadowed the Virgin), and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him.
6. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.
7. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.
8. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only.
9. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision (Greek : *what they had seen*) to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.
10. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come ?
11. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come (cometh) and restore (re-establish) all things.
12. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.
13. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

## THE TRANSFIGURATION AND REVELATION.

**T**HREE are three accounts of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. One in the chapter we have read. Another in the ninth chapter of Mark—in the tenth verse of Mark's account we read, “And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning with one another what the rising from the dead should mean.” Luke has a somewhat different account, but substantially the same. He tells us that Moses and Elias spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

“And after six days.” Does not everything truly religious happen after six days? Is there a measure or a subtle poetry in time? And the Lord rested the seventh day—and the Lord was metamorphosed on the seventh day. Let us take note of time and of the succession of events; whilst men in other sections of life are noting laws of averages, singular points of recurrence and coincidence, let us who live in the Temple also have our eyes open towards the methods and periods of revelation, that we may be well read in the time-bill of Heaven. O fools and slow of heart, to read all the literature of the six days and understand it, and all the signs of the weather and comprehend them, and yet to leave unread and unpenetrated the secret which is the glory of all things! Luke has “after eight days.” It is the same thing—the two days are counted which began and ended. The three evangelists concur in stating that it was after six days the Lord was metamorphosed before three of his chosen ones. After six days we need something: after six days' toil and weariness, exhausted in strength, cast down in spirit, struck by a thousand crossing darts, we require protection, security, revelation, uplifting, an experience and gladness of better worlds.

“Jesus taketh Peter, and James, and John.” He was always taking those men somewhere. He always had his three mighties—as for the rest of us, it is said, “They did not attain unto the first three.” We cannot understand these divine and human trinities: things duplicate one another, and are full of subtle and bewildering typologies. Similitudes that are round about us, the

unwritten yet ever vivid parables, do but distress our poor weak thinking and make fools of us. Yet is there music in the mystery as there are stars hidden in the darkness. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—Peter, James, John—the Old Testament and the New Testament each has its trinity of manhood. Let those who are curious about such matters—and the curiosity is permissible and instructive—consider the different characteristics and temperaments of these men, and see how the three are one and the one three, on earth as in heaven, and on earth as certainly as in heaven. God made man in his own image and likeness, and it takes three of us to make up the whole man. Why be little, separated, isolated creatures, having no connection with counterparts and complements? Why not answer the hunger of the heart, which says, “I am not self-complete,” and go out in the direction of fellowship, union, and integrity?

“Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.” High places should bring high thoughts; matter should help spirit; no man should be vulgar on the top of a mountain. Our pulses should “be throbbing with the fulness of the spring.” This is the purpose of having consecrated houses, churches set apart for one object, whose very air is full of blessing. A man ought to lose all his lower nature in the face of a sunset. It should make him religious, if not Christian. At such a farewell he should tremble with the desire to ascend himself to a purer clime. So in the church he should be alone, though urged by the crowd; he should give himself up to the genius of the place and be a child at home.

We are mountain-born, if we did but know it; we are all hill-men. There be those who take us to the high mountains to show us our littleness, and they do well. They say, “Look up, there are three thousand feet of rock above you; do you not feel small—a grasshopper in the presence of such hugeness?” Partly I do, yet not wholly. Watch me as, with staff in hand, I climb, and as I climb I grow, and by-and-by I stand above the rock, and ask it if it be not a pedestal for a monument. Were I rooted in the ground and could only look at the huge elevation, I might faint in heart and say, “How little I am;” but, knowing that I can put the loftiest mountain of the earth under my feet, stand upon it

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and lift my hand to a height it never climbed, I am greater than the mountain. We should all betake ourselves to high places and secret temples ; we should often meet God on the top of the mountain, and especially early in the morning, the time when Moses went to see the Lord. Then should we come back with the dew of heaven upon our lives, baptized anew, refreshed, and jewelled, and blessed ; and the day, how thick soever should be its trials, and fierce soever its fights, should give way before us, recognising the shining of our face and the sanctity of our whole mien.

“ And was transfigured before them,” metamorphosed, changed into another being. He was three in one, he was one in three. Before this they had not seen their *Lord*, they had but seen their *teacher*; one ray of his glory fell upon them and startled them with a wondrous surprise. There are occasional moments when a man sees *himself*, when he is, so to say, metamorphosed to his own vision. Usually we live dull, gray, languid, commonplace lives ; we are not often roused to our fullest strength—yet now and again things occur in life which reveal us to ourselves. So also with others. We do not see one another, except it may be on a seventh day now and then, a Sabbath, a jubilee, a funeral day, when fear seizes the life and makes us show our true resources and the very roots of our strength, which are often but the roots of our weakness, a joy-day, whose air vibrates with clanging bells, a wedding day, a birthday, an emancipation day, and then from our very faces there radiates a light which never shone there in the vision of man before. We are all conscious of waking-up times, when we lay hold upon our whole strength and realize every fibre and element and force of our manhood. That is always after six days of troubled wonder, bewildering study, distracted, often shattered, often disappointed exercise of love.

Some persons we never have seen but once, though we have associated with them for years. You must keep your eye *always* on the face of your friend if you would really know him. When you are not looking, he may be himself—it was when you did not see him that he gave the revealing look, it was when you did not hear him that the revealing tone entered into his voice—a word, a cry, a glance, a touch, and the vision is past, for ever.

Jesus talked to Moses and Elias, and they spake to him of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The English word decease does not hold all the meaning of that profound, most mysterious interview. They talked of the *decessus*, the exodus of Moses, the exodus which Moses left unaccomplished, the outgoing which seemed to have no corresponding incoming. They spoke of the *decessus*, the exodus of the nobler Moses, who would bring to perfectness of accomplishment the outgoing and the homecoming, for he should accomplish the *decessus* at Jerusalem, mayhap not the death only, coming back into resurrection, but the other part of the *decessus*, the outgoing, the uprising, the ascension, the whole tragedy—a subject worthy of such speakers.

Why do we detach ourselves from our ancestry above? We belong to the grand heroic days. We never meet in God's house without coming to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. We also are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses; why let our eyes plunge themselves in the cold walls as terminal lines? We are not come to the mount that might be touched, but to Mount Zion, more a life than a mountain, the church of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. When these reflections seize the mind and fill it with all their poetry and stir it with all their ineffable passion, we too are metamorphosed, our hymn is not sung by ourselves alone; or, if we have a hymn of our own, they have a hymn of theirs, and the hymns melt and blend, and being transfused, strength to strength, passion to passion, "They sing the Lamb in hymns above, And we in hymns below." We are limited and humbled by our weakness, they are conscious of immortality and imperishable strength. They in the kingdom of his light, we in the kingdom of his trial—the kingdoms are but one. Why do we detach ourselves from the grand unity of humanity, why do we set up ourselves in petty self-completeness? Thus we lose everything: we are scattered pebbles, not a massive and sacred temple. Adam and Moses, Elias and Isaiah, Peter and Paul—these are my ancestors. Thus "the dead loom upon us large and solemn, not to dwarf our stature, but to show to what bigness we may grow." And when I see to what company I belong, the blood of a thousand genera-

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tions quickens within me, and I say, “ They that are with me are more than they that are against me.”

Realize the unity of history, far outstretching lines that begin apparently in the cross and that do really begin there, if we make the cross the first of figures, set up before the foundation of the world, and then see how in Christ all things are united that are in heaven above or on earth beneath, in the far-away twilight of history, in its present sinning and fighting, and in its last developments and completions. He is Alpha and Omega, the First, the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright and Morning Star. The Root and the Offspring—always contradicting himself in words ; always putting the world's pedantry to vexation ; and yet always, in a large reconciliation of thought, finding a nobler eloquence than in the smooth nothings of men who would rather perish than be literally inconsistent. He *himself* is a contradiction, the contradiction of all history, the puzzle of all life—what wonder therefore that in words he should oftentimes appear to be a paradox and a self-contradiction, at once a root and an offspring ?

This metamorphosis probably happened at *night*. Probably, because Luke says, “ And the next day,” and probably, also, because of the overwhelming *sleep* which the disciples felt. Perhaps it was not what we call now sleep, perhaps it was a clairvoyant state. It was no slothful sleep, otherwise the purpose of the Lord had been frustrated in taking them up the mountain to behold the metamorphosis. It was a singular stupefaction a bewilderment, an almost insanity and incoherence, a strange shaking and inspiration of the inner nature, in which the men saw and heard and lived as they never saw and heard and lived before. How the light shone upon the background of the dark firmament, the great arch one gleam, and on it a shining figure, white as the light, and the raiment streaming with rays. “ I am the light of the world”—all light concentrated in that shining Figure, coming out of it and returning to it. That was the true light that lighted every man that cometh into the world. Do not blame the disciples as if they had fallen into a slothful sleep : there are times when we cannot

give a correct account of ourselves or an account that is socially satisfactory—we know not what we say or what we do. Unless a man has been in some such high moods as these he cannot read the New Testament : he does but babble its alphabet, he does not articulate tunefully and in all the pathos of its music the inner eloquence of heaven.

They came down from the mountain : they were not made to live high up in the air or to pine in solitary places. We must not always be in the formal church. One day in seven, then down again ! But, in going down, always take the mountain with you. It is possible to take the mountain home—for what other purpose have we our vacations, holidays, times of change and rest ? Do we leave the Alps out yonder, or do we bring them to the towns and live upon them all the year, till the next time comes for the seventh day of metamorphosis and revelation and up-looking ? If persons can go to Alpine lands and traverse Alpine heights and come back without bringing the Alps with them, what wonder if they can read the New Testament through without its touching their hearts ? Bring the sea home with you, and the great mountain and the cooling snow, and the bracing air and the blue heaven, and the singing birds and the summers of various lands, and these will be the very roots and sources of sustenance during the whole period of service and suffering and divers ministries. Take the *church* home with you, carry *Sunday* all through the week, and you will find how wondrously adapted it is to measure the whole span of the intervening time between itself and itself. Never leave the church, take it—take it home !

They were to tell no man what they had seen. We cannot tell all we know : we have secrets that make the heart throb double life, and we should be poor if we parted with them. We have all had experiences of Christ which we could not tell, for no words have been invented for such experiences. Such looks he has thrown upon us, such warmth he has communicated to us, such promises he has whispered to the heart—we have laid our head upon his shoulder and cried like little children, and we have been stronger for the sweet sorrow. When we have told all we have to tell, we have not begun the tale : we have secret faiths, secret hopes, secret

delights all in keeping with the central truth, but each with an accent unintelligible to the general ear.

Hard lesson—"Tell no man." Who does not like to speak when he has seen great sights or heard sounds of unusual music? Christ has here given the disciples one of their first lessons in the cross. He has just told us, "If any man will follow Me, he must take up his cross daily." In this injunction, Jesus causes the disciples to feel the first pressure of what will become a great weight, namely, the cross of crucifixion. Learn the lesson of *self-suppression*, learn the mystery of *silence*; the wild-talking man never comes to any rich maturity of life. We must always *know* more than we have ever *told*: every author must be greater than his books, every singer greater than his song, every preacher more than his sermon. Do not babble: think. Keep all these things and ponder them in your heart—the uses of all will be seen presently. Does Jesus Christ ever tune the instrument for the purpose of hanging it up on the wall? What musician would do so? He tunes it that he may discourse eloquent music upon it. So when he grants us white and shining revelations of himself and his purpose, it is that we may go down the mountain and heal the lunatic that is raving at its base.

"They questioned with one another what the rising from the dead should mean." The Lord always gives us a problem to save us from intellectual stagnation. Read the life of Jesus Christ, and find how oftentimes he challenges the understanding, the genius, the intellectual penetration and sagacity of man. "What think ye of Christ?" "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And here the disciples wonder what the rising from the dead should mean. Death had not entered into their calculations, death was an element which they had excluded from all their reckoning and thinking. We do exclude from our narrow sums the figures which would first contract and afterwards expand and glorify them. We are still wondering what the rising of the dead shall mean. We are still wondering what our departed ones are doing—they are never sick, they are never in pain, they are never weary—thanks for knowledge so much, but I want to know more: are they ever *here*? how much do they *see*? what do they *know*? do they think about us, pray for us, pluck

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fruit for us from the upper trees, and convey it to the heart by secret messages? Here we are left with a great wonder, walking up the mountain, walking down, wonder follows wonder, and still we live a life of wild or chastened sorrow.

When he came down from the mountain how did he use his exalted and ennobled passion? Did Jesus Christ condemn the people, or did he neglect them? Nay, he rebuked unbelief and he healed affliction. That is to be our work. After our mountain meetings and high festivals of rapture, our supreme hours of joy, let us go down the mountain to reaffirm and to heal.

## LXXI.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we do this day join the Church of all times and all lands, and praise thy name because of thy grace and thy truth. We are part of a great Church, the whole of which thou alone canst see. We have come to the spirits of the just made perfect, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to this great host we add our voice that the hymn of praise which goes up to thee may thereby be strengthened because of our personal thankfulness. Thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad. If sometimes we sit down to reckon up the darkness, that do thou charge to our faithlessness and our meanness of soul. We ought the rather to count the stars thou hast set in the darkness and to number the mercies wherewith thou hast surrounded our life ; then should there be no end to the long reckoning, for thy tender mercies are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore. Give us the loving heart that seeks the blessings that they may be added up and set out in order, and take away from us the disloyal and despairing spirit that counts the afflictions and reckons thee hard in visitation and in judgment.

Thy tender mercies are over all thy works : thou dost give music to the wind and thou dost give fragrance to the flower, and thou givest light unto every star. Thou art always adding to that which is good, so that there is no measure to its beauty and its delightfulness. Our cup runneth over ; for our right hand thou hast a rod, for our left hand a staff, and in the valley of the shadow of death thou dost find for us light and song.

All this thou hast done for us and in us by Jesus Christ, the firstborn of every creature, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He is highly exalted to-day, his name absorbs all other names, and he alone reigns in infinite and indestructible glory. In all things he hath the pre-eminence : having submitted to the lowest humiliation, he sits now upon the highest throne, and if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. May we be in the Saviour, cleansed by his blood, sanctified by his spirit, transfigured into his image, and animated evermore by his noble purpose. Thus may we reveal Christ day by day, showing men what he is, and showing the world that we have bread to eat which was never provided by time or sense.

Thou hast promised us great things. Beyond all our prayer thine answer rises like a firmament filled with lights : ours the poor prayer, thine the infinite reply. Thou hast promised to search the earth through and through to find that which was lost of thine image and likeness, and all that sleep in Christ shall be brought with him at the last, and thou wilt leave no grave unopened ; thou wilt find for us our lost ones, and set them up again, a multitude that no man can number, and thy heaven shall be filled and thy guests shall go out no more for ever. By such visions dost thou draw us forward through the wilderness, by the music of such promises dost thou stir us, and yet soothe us, in all the way of our life.

Deliver us from the fascination cast upon us by unworthy objects, save us from the torment of slavery to things that are mean and worthless, and enable us to set our whole love upon things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. May our heart be in Heaven, may our fellowship be with the Father and with the Son, through the eternal Spirit. May a light above the brightness of the sun make our way glad, and voices spoken to the heart charm away their fear and gloom.

Mercifully help every good man to bear his burden steadily. In thy great love do thou nourish the hearts that are given over to sore trial, heal with balm from heaven the wounded spirit, with thine own gentle hand dry the tears of sorrow, and by frequent shining from behind the cloud do thou grant unto us release from the fear which its darkness inspires. We are all known to thee in every thought and motive, in every purpose and act, and thou wilt deal mercifully with us, for though we be rebels and aliens, yet are we still thine own children : thou didst make us and not we ourselves, and though we are self-torn and self-destroyed, yet amid all the ruin, the shame, thou dost see the traces of thine own image.

Our hope is in Christ, our trust is in the cross, our cry is towards our Father, and it will not be returned to us in mockery, but in great answers of pardon, assurance, and peace. Amen.

### Matthew xvii. 14-27.

14. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15. Lord, have mercy on my son : for he is lunatic, and sore vexed ; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse (seduced or led astray) generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him hither to me.

18. And Jesus rebuked the devil ; and he departed out of him : and the child was cured from that very hour.

19. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out ?

20. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief : for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

22. And while they abode in (went to and fro) Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men :

23. And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

24. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and saith, Doth not your master pay tribute ?

25. He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon ? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom (duties on *goods*) or tribute (poll-tax, Acts v. 37) ? of their own children, or of strangers ? (To the Jews direct taxation was hateful, as a sign of subjugation.)

26. Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money (a stater) : that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

## **TRANSFIGURATION COMPLETED BY BENEFICENCE.**

WE have read the story of the lunatic son in the three Gospels. The differences of narration are notable. It would seem impossible for any three men to tell the same story in the same way, even where the facts are so striking and tragical as in the instance now before us. Mark is the most observant of the writers : always in Mark's statements there is most of indication, colour, and record of movement ; Mark takes notice of attitudes, looks, tones of the voice, and in this instance he has recorded for us some of the most pathetic and touching incidents in the whole case. It was Mark who saw the tears in the man's eyes : it was Mark who overheard the great prayer, " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief ;" and it was Mark who observed all the contortions and paroxysms of the young man immediately before the devil was ordered to quit him. It was Mark who saw two miracles in one—the man from whom the spirit had been cast out was as

one dead, insomuch that many said, “ He is dead,” but Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him, and he arose, and thus performed two miracles upon the sufferer. Let us look at the incident as related by Matthew.

“ And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him.” They had come from the Mount of Transfiguration : one would have thought that after that metamorphosis and that marvellous interview with Moses and Elias, that nothing of an ordinary or commonplace kind would ever have taken place in the lives of Jesus Christ or the three disciples who accompanied him to the great and solemn height. Yet you cannot escape commonplace : Monday will thrust itself sharply upon the heels of Sunday—already on the Sabbath eventide you may hear the throb of the machine getting ready for the week’s work ; and, strange as it may appear, this cure of afflicted persons, this long succession of miracles, had become almost a commonplace in the Saviour’s life. We have been so accustomed to his healing, releasing or expelling devils, straightening those who were burdened, and lifting up those who were cast down, that we seem as if out of our element if not reading an account of a miracle or beholding some marvellous token of power. When Jesus came down from the mountain, one would have thought that the whole subject would have been what had been seen on the great height ; yet, as he came down the hill, he specially covenanted with his disciples that they should say nothing about it. The vision was not to be told to any man ; all four of them were to come back again to their work as if nothing had happened. The heart has a secret history ; man lives a double life. There are dreams we cannot tell, visions and flamings in the night-darkness about which we can say nothing that is coherent—which we cannot put into public language, for it would not be understood, when called upon to relate such strange experience. So they come back to the multitude to take up the thread where they dropped it.

You cannot approach a multitude without finding afflictions. A solemn and instructive circumstance is that. When did any multitude gather that was not afflicted in some of its members or

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afflicted as a whole? Wherever we go we carry affliction with us; sometimes it is borne silently; most of us have some secret or unspeakable pain—every heart knows the bite of its own hunger. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy. But for such circumstances Jesus Christ need not have come to the multitude. He never went to the multitude to join its mere feasting or hilarity, to unite his voice in its rude song of momentary delight. Whenever Jesus Christ approached a multitude it was to do the very thing which he did in this instance—to heal its lunacy, to soothe its pain, to comfort its unutterable distress. He had no other mission on earth. Take away the sin and the consequent sorrow of mankind and Jesus Christ would have no place in human history. He was born to save, he came to heal. When our sins and our sorrows are removed from our history, then Jesus Christ as an incarnate Son of God will sustain no further relation to it. The end will come, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God and his Father, and God shall be all in all.

The man had a peculiar speech to make to Jesus: his earnestness made him frank. He did not seek to flatter the disciples or to excuse them, but plainly he says, “I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him.” A charge which is brought against the church to-day. May I add that it is a charge which is often but too just? The world is a lunatic at the door of the church to-day, and the church seems to care next to nothing for the sufferer and to have no power over the deadly affliction. The church has its incantations, its old outworn forms of expression, its decayed machinery, and its effete institutionalism, but the miracle-working power, the divine inspiration, the sovereignty over all hindrances and stumbling-blocks, alas! where have these fled? What is the church worth if it cannot cure the lunacy of the world? The church, like its Master, has nothing to do in the world unless it be to heal and to bless and to save mankind. The church was not instituted to amuse the world, but to *save* it, not to mock the world by speaking to it a pointless and useless speech, but to *redeem* the world through Jesus Christ the Lord.

Discipleship is not enough, for it may be merely nominal. Outward ceremonies and institutional relationships are not enough.

—these may be but external and momentary and factitious. Discipleship of the *heart* alone can do any good. The inflamed and inspired heart cannot speak words of weakness ; let that heart utter itself, and in its tone there will be the music of a subtle sympathy, and the world will be the better for its illumining and comforting speech. How is it with our hearts ? Our heads are clever enough and clear enough, and may be sufficiently stored with a certain kind of information, but what about the heart, its sympathy, its insight, its moral intuition, its redeeming desires, its unity, almost identity, with the Son of God ?

Jesus rebuked the generation around him, and specially accentuated his rebuke when he looked at his disciples, but he himself was not disturbed about the case. It might have excited his anxieties ; it would certainly have troubled an impostor. With a singular confirmation of his own truthfulness, he begins by pouring almost contempt, certainly stern rebuke, upon those who had failed in the great encounter. “ O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? ” That was not the introduction which a man would have adopted who had any doubt about the sovereignty and completeness of his own resources. Woe unto us, when our rebukes of others are greater than the redemptive power that is in our own hearts. He is not the saviour of his age who can but *curse* it. It may be in eloquent denunciation the prophet may pour his maledictions upon his time, but unless he can follow his malediction by beneficent action on his own part, he is but a Balaam, self-inspired, and his curse may possibly return to his own head.

What did Jesus Christ say, after rebuking the faithlessness and perverseness of the generation ? He said, “ Bring him hither to me.” Mark the noble majesty, the simple ease, the absolute consciousness of adequate power. “ Bring him hither to me.” He had been upon the Mount of Transfiguration, but that gave him no access of power ; he was the same before he ascended the hill. He had seen Moses and Elias, and conversed with them about the decease that was to be accomplished at Jerusalem, but long before that there was Resurrection in the hem of his garment, and heaven in the utterance of his benediction.

“ Bring him hither to me.” The case is a difficult one ; “ bring him hither to me.” Others have tried and failed ;

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"bring him hither to me." The church has done its little utmost, and the church stands with hands helplessly hung by its side—"bring him hither to me." So would we have all church difficulties settled. When men complain of the inefficiency of the church, the uselessness of the ministry, the want of power in Christian institutions, we will not close the argument upon grounds so narrow ; we add, " You have still to see the Master ; you must wait until he comes down from the mountain height. After you have seen him you shall form a complete verdict upon the case, but not until you have had an interview with Christ himself must you consider yourself in a position to adjudge the merits of Christianity, as he alone can represent it."

Judge everything by Christ's speech. Condemn the church if you please, and your condemnation may be generally just, but do not let the condemnation of the church include one word of criticism concerning its Head and Lord. You cannot be so disappointed with the church as Christ himself was. It is not in your power to form an indictment against the church so complete, so incisive, so withering as that which Jesus Christ himself framed and launched in language of fire. He is more grieved than we can be over the failures of the church ; still he stands there with undiminished light, with undiminished grace, still willing to make up the church's deficiencies and to set up his personal claim to the sovereignty of all hearts.

There was one spirit which Jesus Christ himself could not cast out. As for this devil, he ordered it out of the young sufferer—"Come out of him," said he, " and enter no more into him," and the devil, after a last paroxysm, came out. There was, however, a spirit which Jesus Christ himself could not so expel. What was it that defied Omnipotence itself ? It was *Unbelief*, the spirit of unfaith, the spirit that says, " Do not go in that direction or trust that word or risk that adventure ; keep within your own strength, make provision for yourself, and do not trust the Divine word. Always keep hold of the world with one hand whilst you try to lay hold of heaven with the other. That is the spirit of *unbelief*, and Jesus Christ himself could not expel the spirit from the human heart. Hence he said to the suffering parent, " If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Even we have to provide something upon which the Son of God can

operate. Miracles have to be done by *consent* when they touch the moral region.

How is it that ye have no faith? What is faith? It is the sixth sense; it is the unnameable and immeasurable power of the human heart; it is that peculiar faculty which sees God and lays hold of him, and magnifies the part into the whole, and rests with absoluteness of trust upon the almighty and the equity and love of God. You cannot define faith in adequate words. All that is in our power is but thus to hint at it dimly. The soul which has felt its sovereignty, and has been borne on under its benign and elevating influence, can understand in speechlessness the Divine faculty, and can perform the marvellous function.

So, then, Jesus Christ is baffled sometimes. He can walk upon the sea, or raise the dead, or cast out devils, but when he comes against the *unbelieving heart*, when he encounters the spirit of unfaith, which is the spirit of self-trust, he cannot do any mighty works there. We must, then, begin by repairing, so to say, our faith, if we would have deeper fellowship with heaven, larger and richer manifestations of Divine grace and bestowals of Divine power. The wound is not in our intelligence, it is in our faith; the fatal stab has not been inflicted upon our Genius, but upon our Belief.

Surely this man prayed for us all when he said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. I bring a little faith—all I have; I gather up my heart into one strain of faith, but so much is lacking—help thou mine unbelief; make up what is lacking, complete what is deficient, and thus let the miracle begin in me and pass on to my child." Why should the church be raising false issues and following false scents altogether, by supposing that the wound is in its intelligence, its literature, its genius, its intellectual department? whereas the church probably never was stronger in intellect or richer in literary resources than she is to-day. It is her faith that requires renewal, replenishment, enlargement. I know not of any nobler, sweeter prayer, punctuated with sobs and tears, than this cry, "Help thou mine unbelief!"

Yet the disciples had this redeeming fact on their side. They were *troubled* about their own failure; they asked a frank question about their inability to cast out the devil. "Then came the dis-

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ciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?" They will do better things some day ; men who can thus freely talk about their own failures will not fail in the long run. Given a number of men who fail and never *inquire* about the failure, that is to say, never search into its reason, and such men will never do anything great or lasting in the world ; but, given people in any department or relation of life who diligently and searchingly ask themselves, " Why did we fail—how is it that we have not succeeded in this instance ?" and, whatever the occasion be which elicits that inquiry, success must of necessity follow such inquests into inability and failure. Men in business should ask themselves once a week or once a month, " How is it that we have not succeeded ?" Students and learners of all kinds should ask themselves, " How is it that we have not mastered this difficulty ?" Churches looking out from their windows upon the world's distress and madness should ask themselves, penetratingly and with a sense of humiliation, which is itself the beginning of strength, " How is it that to-day the world's lunacy is as grievous as it ever was ? Why those multitudes outside ? why this blasphemy in the sacred air of the Sabbath ? why this contempt of religious institutions ? why the laugh of mockery as the multitudes pass the church ?"

When we set ourselves to such earnest inquiries, Christ will tell us how it is that we have not succeeded. It will be the beginning of better days for us when from the first line to the last we go in searching critical inquest through our whole ministry and mission in the world, asking *how it is* that we have not succeeded. Do not cover up the case. Seek not to wrap it up or throw it behind and become indifferent about it, but stand over your failures, acknowledge them, blame yourself for them, and ask the heart and ask the Master this searching question, " Why have we failed ?"

Mark now points out that Jesus Christ went through Galilee, and he would not that any man should know it. He was, as it were, skulking through to the end. In his own land he was passing as one who was afraid of being identified ; it was as if he had walked out in the night-time, and studied a map of the place, and found out the mountain paths and the untrodden ways that he might get to the end.

Now that the miracle is performed, he returns to the great subject of converse on the mount. “ While they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again ; and they were exceeding sorry.” Instead of saying, “ Ye shall deliver him,” he said, “ He shall be delivered into the hands of men,” for it was God that delivered him, not man : Jesus was not murdered, he was offered as a lamb. Murder may be charged upon those who laid bloody hands upon him, but in the larger view this was the Divine doing, and the fulfilment with in the limits of time of the sovereign purpose of eternity. The disciples heard only the first part of the speech—“ The Son of man shall be betrayed, and they shall kill him.” We seldom hear any sentence quite through : men are bad listeners, they catch what they imagine to be the leading words, and on those they rest and from those they draw all their inferences, and so absorbed do they become in parts of the introductory speech that they do not hear its final close. Otherwise when Jesus Christ said, “ On the third day he shall be raised again,” they would have been as men who beheld a harvest field clothed with golden wheat, waving its head gently and as it were gratefully under the breezes and under the great light of noonday. Instead of seeing the end, they saw only the beginning : they heard the bad news, or what to them was bad news, and they listened no longer. It is possible to listen to the gospel and not to hear it : it is possible to listen to the reading of the Divine word and to miss the one verse that casts light upon the whole story. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

I include in my exposition to-day the passage concerning the payment of tribute money, just to show the violent transitions through which this wondrous life passed. Here we have a man performing a miracle which the disciples left unperformed : here we have him forecasting his death and preaching the great fact and doctrine of his resurrection, and then we have him vexed and humiliated by some question of personal taxation. How completely did he fulfil every function of life ! with what attention he attended to the details of every day’s engagements : nothing hurried, nothing overdriven, nothing neglected, no fragments lost. Why, when he comes to leave the tomb, we may not have to

wonder if we find the linen clothes wrapped and laid away by a patient hand. If we so find the grave-clothes, it will be of a piece with all the attention to details which has been disclosed in this marvellous life.

The Man has received the death-shock : he is straitened until the baptism of blood be accomplished : his soul is in great suffering, and yet he is challenged about the tribute money, and attends to it as if it were his whole business. Nor does he chide Peter too sternly. Peter had committed the Master : being asked aside whether the Master paid tribute money, he rashly answered "Yes." He often gave foolish replies, and in this instance he committed the Master ; but the Master would not commit the servant. He did not contradict him ; he took the case up as Peter himself had placed it : though he compelled him to acknowledge that he was historically and argumentatively wrong, yet he would not place him in a dilemma. Things were now getting serious—he gave Peter a lesson about the payment of the tribute money when his soul was getting exceeding sorrowful even unto death. So he told Peter what to do, where to find the money, and he laid down as the principle of his conduct, "lest we offend them." Give no needless offence ; do not go out of your way to vex and harass people. If some great moral principle be not involved, then take you the course of conciliation, and be anxious always to do that which is courteous and graceful. If a great moral principle be involved, then go to the cross rather than surrender it ; but if there be no such principle involved, then put yourselves to a good deal of trouble not to give unnecessary offence and inflict needless vexation.

The picture suffers nothing from being looked at in its extreme lights. The great miracle, the greater sacrifice, and the little question of tribute money—that is human life to-day in the Church : praying, crying to heaven, lifting up great psalms to heaven, and to-morrow opening the door, lighting the lamp, cleaning the window, writing the letter, and doing earth's little business with diligence and faithfulness. The Master did all this, and to all this we are called. If we settle the question of the tribute money, and all other little questions of detail in the spirit of the great Sacrifice, then our little actions will be great, and about our meanest doings there will be something of the sacredness and the dignity of Christ's sacrifice.

## LXXII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have come at the appointed time to the appointed place, and we know that thou wilt be more gracious to hear than we can be expressive in prayer ; thine answer is greater than our request, as thy grace is greater than our sin. Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think : as the heaven is high above the earth, so is thy thought high above our thought. In thy presence we see our littleness; and before the unsearchable riches of Christ we see our poverty ; but those riches were gathered for us—he who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. Through death we have life, through blood we have cleansing and forgiveness, yea, thou hast made the wrath of man to praise thee, and out of evil hast thou brought infinite good.

Behold, thou dost work by thine own way, and none can search thee : we cannot find thee out unto perfection, nor can we understand the mind of the Lord and express it in words of men. We will therefore trust thee, resting in thee with unquestioning love, casting all our care, as we have cast all our sin, upon him who is mighty to save. We will not question thee, nor set up our reason against thee, nor endeavor to clear away the cloud by our own feeble breath. Whilst we are in the cloud do thou speak to us, and thy voice shall give us security and joy.

Through all the week thou hast kept us ; thou hast beset us behind and before, and laid thine hand upon us. Thou hast measured out unto us our food, and thou hast kept for us a place of rest, and thou hast not withheld the blessing of sleep. The light has been the brighter for thy presence, and the darkness has rested upon us, not as a fear, but as a benediction, because of thy tender care. Gathered together in thine house our hearts glow with ardent love, and our mouth is opened in sweet and holy hymn, which we breathe unto the heavens because we must praise the hand from which our blessings come.

As for our sin, it is our daily distress ; we loathe it and repeat it ; we pray for its forgiveness and then commit it again. Yet the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin. If our daily sin be upon us, so is the daily sacrifice near at hand—the eternal cross, the tree of life, the way to pardon. “ God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We would be crucified with Christ—we would know the fellowship of his sufferings that we may also know the power of his resurrection. We would be fellow-sufferers with Christ, he atoning,

we repenting : he the one propitiation, and we the receivers of the atonement which he made. Grant unto us sweet answers to this our prayer, then shall all other prayers be answered in this infinite reply, " He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? " Grant us this unity with Christ, this identity with the Son of God, this tender, gracious, growing oneness with the very heart of thy grace ; then shall all our life be within the ministry of thy care, and we shall lack no good thing.

We put our life into thine hands : it was thine before it was ours, it will be thine again. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Our days are swifter than a post ; yea, swifter than a weaver's shuttle ; yea, swifter than a flying shadow, and there is none that abideth. Help us whilst it is called to-day to call upon thee with our whole heart and to serve thee with our whole strength.

We have come to bless thee for blessings at home : for the care of the little ones, for all the light that has made the house glad, for all the success with which thou hast blessed the week. Hear us when we praise thee for special revelations of thy grace—for close and tender presences of thyself amid distraction and darkness and manifold vexation. Keep our hearts and minds in the love of Christ, save us from all bitterness of feeling, spare us from the distress of wrath, clamour, and uncharitableness, help us to forgive our enemies as we ourselves are forgiven of God. May we live the noble life and breathe the ever-enlarging prayer, and realize the ever-gracious blessing of our Father's presence. Amen.

### **Matthew xviii. 1-14.**

1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest (superior) in the kingdom of heaven ?
2. And Jesus called a little child (probably one of Peter's) unto him, and set him in the midst of them.
3. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in (on account of) my name receiveth me.
6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.
7. Woe (an interjection of sorrow) unto the world because of offences ! for it must needs be that offences come ; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh !
8. Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee (cause thee to sin) cut them off, and cast them from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life

halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

12. How think ye ? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray ?

13. And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of (over) that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

## GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM.

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?" So blatantly can we debase the sublimest subjects ! See how they put their words together, and learn from the wild incoherence how possible it is for us to commit the same impious ironies. "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?" as if there could be any greatness there of our making, as if our stature could outshoulder the great dignities, as if we could be *somebody* in the infinite kingdom of light and purity and grace. These men were not struck by the grandeur of the idea of the heavenly kingdom, they were plagued with the vexatious question as to which of them should cut a figure in it !

Is it not so now, to some extent ? Are we overwhelmed by the occasion, or do we lift our heads above it and wave our hand over it as if we were bigger after all ? In the church, for instance, in holy psalm, in tender prayer, in the reading of the revealed word, how do we deport ourselves ? Do we shrink away into an all but invisible perspective, being nothing when such light shines and such music thrills the air, or do we come forward in bold, plain self-assertiveness ? The subject—when that subject is the kingdom of heaven—should always be greater than the men who approach its consideration. In that sense the altar should be greater than the

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suppliant ; for the altar stands for God and the suppliant but a piping, whining sinner that may hardly let his voice be heard lest his very prayer should become an impiety and his intercession aggravate the guilt which he deplores.

One would have thought that men having had given to them the phrase, “the kingdom of heaven,” would have been so dazzled by its glory and so impressed by its tender graciousness, that they would never have thought of themselves at all, and especially never have thought of their gradation, or their status within its infinite circumference. I tell you we all have learned the wicked trick of spoiling everything God gives to us ! We would pollute the stars if we could clutch them. We have spoiled the earth, ripped it up into millions of graves, and made it an Aceldama, and if we could only get at the stars we should disfigure and mar their symmetry and music.

Yet how keen we are in blaming the ancients for all these things. We sing about the wicked Jews, and relieve ourselves by historical psalmody. We reproach the past, not knowing that we ourselves crucified the Lord of Glory, *we* made the cross, stretched the sufferer upon it, drove the nails, and crushed the thorns into the throbbing temples. Do not let us put away such events as if they were historical only ; that is a subtle device of the enemy. Men write books now against Christ or against the Christian theology, and they only succeed in so far as they can dig a great historical chasm between the facts and the critics. My Christ is crucified *to-day* : there is no space of time between me and him. If I could scatter eighteen centuries between us I should gain so much relief from self-torment. But he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and whilst we are in this world we must be partakers of its greatest tragedy. We cannot separate between the cross and ourselves any number of years that may mitigate our personal heinousness in the matter of this infinite responsibility.

So, then, we are asking the old questions now, repeating the old deeds to-day, and at this very moment there may be uppermost in some men’s thoughts the inquiry—“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?” We are not appalled by the subject : contrariwise, we are familiar with every sacred phrase—yea, we have taken God’s whole revelation and gone over it in words so frequently that now we repeat them almost mechanically. Could

we think ourselves back to the time of Matthew the Apostle, who gives us the expressive phrase, “the kingdom of heaven”—could we think and feel ourselves back until the phrase came to us for the first time, what throb of feeling, what high and sacred animation, what marvellous challenges of the imagination should we feel! Yet that phrase may be repeated so often that we may begin ourselves to map it out into greater, smaller—greater, lesser—higher, lower—superior and inferior, and allot men to its various occupancy. Familiarity may destroy reverence : we may repeat our sacred phrases so often as to lose their lustre or their bloom.

Jesus Christ now answers the question with a great but most unexpected reply : “ And Jesus called a little child unto him, and sat him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” As if he should say, “ You are asking who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, forgetting the earlier question, *how to get into* the kingdom of heaven. Pause before you begin to take your seat in the kingdom of heaven : be sure you are *in* the kingdom itself.” The question takes upon itself a thousand wrong accents, and smites like a great wind from every corner of heaven. “ Before you preach the truth, be sure you feel its power ; before you theologise be sure you can pray ; before you hold high controversy on things literary and theological, be sure your hearts have been cleft in twain, and all your self-righteousness has been expelled from you like the poison of hell. “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” “ You are asking me who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven—I draw your minds to an earlier question : Are we in heaven’s kingdom—have we mistaken the vestibule for the temple—have we mistaken the gate for the inner fire, and the gentle, infinite hospitality of God ? ” Let us first consider whether we are in the kingdom, and in proportion as we feel ourselves to be *in* the kingdom of heaven shall we have little concern as to our particular place within the glowing sphere.

Speeches like these of Christ’s go right down to the very core and root of things, and make us fundamental in our questioning, vital, anxious even to agony in the inquiries which we address to

him. A small thing to settle *gradation*, if we have not entered into the mystery of *participation*.

Jesus Christ was always fundamental in his teaching. Who but himself dare have represented the kingdom of heaven and his greatness by a little child? Who but himself had the sublime audacity, the infinite tranquillity of power, which enabled him to say, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed?" Christ lifted up the little into grand typology; Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost; Christ lighted the candle and swept the house diligently till he found the tenth piece; Christ wandered over the mountains to seek the strayed one; Christ gave commandment to gather up the fragments that nothing be lost. He is great walking upon the sea, great when standing at the grave of Lazarus, and, with a loud voice that sent its resurrectional resonance through all the chambers of the dead, says, "Lazarus, come forth;" but, oh, to me in my tenderest moments, when my heart is all tears and my life is lifted up into one crying prayer, he is greatest when he calls a child and reveals the kingdom of heaven under the infinite simplicity of a child's trustful, loving, gentle heart.

It was a great day in the Church when that little child stood there and all-unconsciously represented the kingdom of heaven. Dear little child!—so little that the Saviour took him up into his arms: a hand all dimples, a cheek so fair, made for the kiss of love and trust and blessing, and eyes that had no speculation in them, still a gentle wonder of dreamy love, looking round itself wondering at the scene. And yet that child was made that day to set forth to all the ages the kingdom of heaven! Where, then, are the great, the noble, the wise, the rich? Where are the ingenious, the intellectual, the learned, the men of mighty brain and mind? Where are they? There is folly in that question. I have always found that in proportion as a man is truly learned is he truly modest; in proportion as a man is really great is he really childlike. Herein I would repeat my own experience as a preacher: if I have to preach one sermon upon which my whole future depends, and if I have to choose my audience, I shall fill the church with the greatest preachers, the greatest scholars, the

greatest men—they will have more pity for me, more sympathy with me, keener insight into any faculty I may possess, than inferior men can have. As it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men, so it is better to fall into the hands of the higher class of men than into the hands of those who are inferior in conception, insight, and range of sympathy.

Jesus Christ in this discourse, as in every other, was *himself* the sermon. He humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant ; he was rich yet for our sakes became poor ; he took a towel and girded himself and washed the feet of his disciples, and said, “ Ye call me Master and Lord : so I am ; if I therefore have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. We are called not only, therefore, to see the child in his arms, but to see the still younger, purer child that held the typical one. They are both children : the child represents the Christ, the Christ represents the Father : “ He that receiveth me receiveth not me, but him that sent me.”

Herein, then, is a practical inquiry : have we the *child-heart*? We might pause here to rebuke those who found denominations upon isolated texts. In ancient times there was a denomination actually built upon this one expression about the little child ; people who mistook childishness for childlikeness built a denomination upon the illustration here given by Jesus Christ. They thought the more childish they were the more like Christ they would be. I will not recite to you the enormities they perpetrated in the name of childhood. I only dwell upon the point to show you how possible it is so to strain the letter as to miss the spirit, and how mischievous it is to pervert the sweetest and grandest sayings of the Lord. Childlikeness does not mean ignorance : childlikeness does not mean pretended modesty ; childlikeness does not mean that a man who is conscious of his power should tell a lie, saying that he is not at all conscious of spiritual strength and insight. Childlikeness is simplicity, trustfulness, utter unconsciousness in the sense of vain boasting and glory, gentleness, love, sincerity of heart and motive. Do not strain the letter, but endeavour to penetrate the meaning of the spirit. Few words are so misunder-

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stood as *childlikeness, modesty, amiability, simplicity*. Whenever I hear of a preacher who is so *simple*, so *very simple*, I feel no particular warming of heart towards him ; it may be that he is only inane, wanting in vigour, jejune, sapless, fireless. Simplicity—do not abuse the word—simplicity is the last result of wisdom, energy, robustness, and intellectual industry. Simplicity is an outcome, a result, as rest is. The worlds that fly around their centres are at rest because of their velocity. This childlikeness is not an ostentation, not a strenuous endeavour to become a child outwardly and literally ; it is wholly different, and can be only understood in its deeper senses and finer applications by those who have passed through the great spiritual process of crucifixion, having had all boasting taken out of them by the cross of Christ.

So Jesus proceeds to say that if the hand offend, or the foot offend, or the eye offend, there must be cutting off and plucking out. Whatever stands in the way of that grand spiritual reduction which ends in childlikeness must be taken away. Where then are we ? Where are the children, the little children ? We are theological—are we *Christian*? We are clever—are we *good*? We talk about Christ—do we *live* Christ ? We defend the Gospel—do we *exemplify* it ? We speak with the tongues of men and of angels—have we *charity*? How do we take rebukes, slights, rebuffs, misconceptions, misrepresentations ? There is an ostentation of childlikeness, and I know of no outrage much greater upon the spirit of the sanctuary than to appear to be children when we have not in reality the child's heart.

This course of reasoning would be attended—were it carried out legitimately—by many practical results. Many would be first who are now last, some might be last who are now first. At all events, the great vital question would be put by every man to his own heart—am I *in* the kingdom ? Jesus Christ will not have the child spirit slighted, insulted, or neglected : “ Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.” It was the custom in Syria and in Greece so to treat criminals. It was an ancient custom to encase criminals in lead and to throw them into the sea furthest from the shore. Jesus Christ is not now inventing a new method of punishment : he is not speaking vindictively, he is adapting his conversation to

what was well known to the people to whom he addressed himself. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me." Why, what harm can there be in that? It is the pastime of the church, it is one of the chief recreations of the world, to snub the Christian, to condemn the praying man, to give the suppliant a nudge as you pass him, and to laugh at the fool who speaks into vacuity. The Master takes another view of the case. We shall have to account for our contempt. The idle words we speak against sacred exercises and spiritual relationships will gather themselves up into a severe accusation against us one day. These children, men of the child-heart, keep the world sweet. Ten righteous men saved the city, the child-heart saves the world from the decrepitude and ghastliness of old age.

When this doctrine is realized, we shall live more in grace than in genius; our life will be simple because deeply rooted in God and in truth. Instead of vexing ourselves with ten thousand questions which never can be settled, we shall nestle ourselves in the heart of the Father. Recall the case of Abraham. In his case one of the greatest words in human speech or human history had its beginning. The Lord took him out one night and showed him all that was visible of the host of heaven, and said to the childless wanderer, "Look up—even SO shall thy seed be." What followed? And Abraham, no longer the mighty chief and audacious explorer of lands unknown, no longer the owner of countless flocks and riches of an Eastern kind, became *himself* a little child: and Abraham BELIEVED God—the first time the word "believed" occurs in the Bible in that instance—and Abraham believed God: said to Sight, "Stand back!" said to the laws of Nature, "Hold your peace!" said to a misgiving heart, "Silence, thou lying tempter!" And he *believed* God.

How much there is in that word *believe* as it was first written! Abraham nestled in the heart of God, nurtured and fed himself upon the Divine vitality—such is the meaning of the word "believed." Abraham as a little child nestled in the very heart of God, so he became the father of the faithful, the head of all the children. He exemplified the child heart, relinquishing his own grandeur, his own ability, his own social status, his own will. Impoverishing himself of all that the world would have counted characteristic as to grandeur and force, he became a little child,

and went into the warm heart and fed himself upon the Divine life and love.

May we thus know by manifold discipline, by anxious experience, even by painful suffering, what we can never be taught by the mere letter—how wondrous, how restful is the *child-heart!*

## LXXIII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, our hearts have a longing desire to enter into thy courts, even into the innermost place of thy dwelling, there to behold such of thy glory as our vision can endure. Thou hast inspired us with a great ambition : this is not of our own creation, but of thine ; our desire is to see thee, to love thee, to read thy truth more deeply and more understandingly, and to express thy purpose in all the breadth and force of our daily life. We have come home, we have been brought home ; stung by pain, made mad by hunger, embittered by disappointment, we have returned to our Father's house, and to-day we would be admitted to his presence. Thou didst seek us and thou hast found us, and what is worthy in us to be found thou only knowest, for we are filled with shame, and wounded and utterly undone. Behold the image is in us, but in the eyes of thine own grace, and by the grace of God we are what we are. Wherein we have done evil and spoiled all our days and utterly stained them with guilt, let thine answer be one of redemption and not of judgment : let grace prevail over law, and let the tender gospel of the blood of the Son of God prevail to silence the just accusations of thy law.

Thy law is severe upon us, but still righteous. It cries for our life, it pursues our soul, it demands the uttermost drop of blood that is in our guilty hearts ; but thou hast arrested the law, thou hast spoken thy gospel, thou hast set up the cross, and Jesus Christ is now our Redeemer and Saviour, our Priest and Prophet and King, and in him would we hide ourselves as in a rock that cannot be shaken. There is no end to thy mercy, thy compassions are more in number than the dews of the morning, thy kindness is thrown round about us as a great defence and a perpetual comfort, and thine eye is upon us, not searchingly in judgment, but compassionately in redemption. Herein therefore do we hope, and in this is our abiding confidence.

Whilst we are in thine house, fill the place with thy presence. Make room for thyself, and grant unto us visions of thy face that shall make our hearts rejoice with a great gladness. There is trouble in our soul, there are great tears in our eyes, a solemn fear burdens our spirit like a weight that cannot be borne, and the little light that is in the sky is threatened to be driven out by an infinite gloom. Do thou then come to us thyself with revelation and light and assurance and with repetition of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and so do thou command thy blessing to

rest upon us as to liberate us from every chain and bring us from under the dominion of every terrifying fear.

Thou knowest what our days have been, and what to-morrow shall yet come, with new chances and opportunities, and offers of larger light and nobler liberty. Thou knowest those who have a great fear before them during the coming week, who are dreading the hour that shall try their very life, who are now crying unto thee to be fortified against the trial that awaits them. The Lord's grace be magnified above man's fear, the sustaining power of the goodness of God lift up those that are crushed, until they feel the burden no more. Enter into every one of our houses, not as a glance of light, presently to depart, but as an abiding glory, a perpetual guest, yea as King of the house, and Father and Ruler of all.

Go with us in our walking up and down in the earth, and in the doing of all the business of life ; help us to do it with moral dignity, with a consciousness of integrity before God, knowing that our purpose is true, and our design wholly honourable in thy sight. Give us a right view of things : show us that our life is in our nostrils, that we are here for a moment, and will presently be gone : animate us by the spirit of Christ, fill us with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ennable us by every consideration that can lift up the life towards the light that is in thyself ; save us from despair, deliver us in temptation, guard us in danger, surround us all the way through this slippery path, keep our feet from falling, our eyes from tears, our soul from death.

Have compassion upon us every moment of the day. Help us to forgive our enemies ; with the noble charity of Christ's own spirit enable us in all things not to return evil for good, but to return good for evil ; smitten on the one cheek, may we turn the other also ; may it be our desire to know what Christ would be and do, that we may be and do as Christ.

The Lord help us in all time to bear the burden, to walk steadily across the swamp—enable us to find the bridge of God's own building over every difficult river—bring us every one at last to see the meaning of it all, and to give praise to him who by many a devious way has led us to the common rest. Amen.

### Matthew xviii. 15-35.

15. Moreover if thy brother shall trespass (and if thy brother shall sin) against thee, go and tell him his fault (convict him) between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17. And if he shall neglect (refuse) to hear them, tell it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church (assembly or society), let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (*Ubi tres, ibi Ecclesia*—a saying of the Fathers.)

21. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ?

22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times ; but, Until seventy times seven (symbolic numbers).

23. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents (two millions and a half sterling) :

25. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt (literally a debt contracted through a *loan*).

28. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence ; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30. And he would not ; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst (*entreatedst*) me :

33. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

34. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

**BROTHERHOOD AND FORGIVENESS.**

A THREAD of connection binds these apparently broken sentences. The subject is the child-heart—these are illustrations of its actions in daily life. A notable consequence is the fact that Jesus Christ himself was the living exemplification of his own doctrine. He was himself the child in the midst of us ; he was meek and lowly in heart. Our first lesson, therefore, is founded on the fact that the child-heart may be associated with the keenest *intellectual penetration*. Carefully considered, it will be found that these illustrations are most remarkable instances of Christ's intellectual virility, especially as revealing profound knowledge of human nature.

How could *he* know how to portray sin so vividly who knew no sin himself ? How could he enter into feelings which had never excited his own heart ? Account for this. Yet never was sin drawn by the hand of so powerful an artist. We are told that only those who have known delirium tremens can describe its effect, or give any true hint of its infernal revelations. Surely only the *sinner* can talk about sin. There will be some slip of the tongue on the part of any man who attempts to talk about that of which he himself has had no experience : he will break down in his portraiture, he will employ false colours, he will set things in undue relationships. Yet the absolutely sinless One describes sin : spotless, incorruptible Virtue sits down to paint every lineament of hideous vice, the Sun of holiness undertakes to photograph the ghastliness of crime !

How can it be done ? We should mock the man who knew nothing about music undertaking to give his opinion about it. A man who had never handled a brush or mingled two colours would be mocked if he claimed to paint the simplest object in nature. His want of experience would be thrown in his face as an argument against his pretensions, and justly so. It is in this way that men acquire influence and draw around themselves the trust of others ; their experience is so rich, so varied, so painful in its exactness, so exquisitely coincident with the facts of this tragical life. Jesus Christ, however, undertakes to describe *sin*, and to track the evil motive all through and through its winding way in

the cavernous heart, and to watch its coming out at the last in vivid and actual expression. How will he do this? We can tell, too, exactly how the Sun will paint the portrait of crime—we can compare the photograph with the original, we can say, "Look on this picture and on this," and laugh at the minister who undertook to complete a photograph about which he himself knew nothing. In this way we can tell precisely whether Christ preached in pretence or in truth when he attempted to describe human nature.

The doctrine must be without value if he does not fully understand the nature to which he proposes to apply it. We have many superficial religions, simply because we have many superficial theories of *human nature*. How can *he* prescribe for a disease who never heard of it before? How can he undertake to speak a language of which he does not know so much as one letter? We have easy remedies, because we have ignorant conceptions of the symptoms and realities with which we have to deal. Christianity is mysterious because sin is mysterious—the remedy must be adapted to the disease. Christ saw the mystery of our life, and adapted the mystery of his religion to it. Beware of any suggestion that is marked by extreme and miscalled simplicity in this matter of redeeming and reclaiming human nature. Human nature is not *itself* a simple construction: find simple keys for simple locks, but where the lock is complicated, the key must match its complication in every line.

When I enter the Christian sanctuary and hear the Christian religion enunciated, I am struck by its mysteriousness, its remoteness from all common things, its metaphysical and transcendental claim and point of observation, and in my ignorance I say, "Surely something simpler than this could be devised." But God sends me back to consider my own nature—know *thyself*. When I have studied the lock, I find that the mystery was in *me*, not in *God*—in sin, not in truth—in rebellion, not in redemption.

How could Jesus Christ undertake to speak that parable of the prodigal son? His audacity amazes me. Let him paint the well-behaved boy, that never left his father's house an hour, that retired

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regularly and rose punctually, and pursued the even tenor of his way all through the hours of the day, with undeviating punctilio-  
ness ; let him tell us about his prayers, his virtues, his untempted integrity, his paper loyalty—*there* he may be at home ; but Son of God, Child of the heavens, Companion of angels—how can *he* undertake to describe the way of the prodigal ? He will stumble ; he will make the most ludicrous mistakes. How will he talk about riotous living and harlots, and all the ways of darkness and all the speech of hell ? He will pronounce that speech like a foreigner ; there will be an accent in its utterance that will make us smile as if mocking the man who had undertaken to speak such a speech. Let any critic sit down to consider the parable of the prodigal son simply as a delineation of human nature, and say if he could amend one word, add one hue to the vivid colouring, or mark in more graphic boldness the outline of the madman's career.

Whence this knowledge of human nature ? Truly Jesus needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. That he should never have been corrected in his delineation of *virtue* is a commonplace, but that he should never have been criticised successfully in his delineation of *vice* transcends in power of surprise any miracle of his with which I am acquainted. Take this instance of trespasses and forgiveness and ask how far they co-ordinate with all we know of human nature. Did the Man know what he was talking about ? Did he pronounce our language like a foreigner ? Did he give merely superficial etchings, or faithful and undeniable delineations of our very selves ? Let us see.

“ If thy brother shall trespass against thee.” But *do* brothers trespass against one another ? How bold the assumption, how improbable the circumstance ! The Man romances. It is impossible that *brother* should trespass against *brother*—what is the speaker thinking of ? Brothers will love brothers, brother will never disagree with brother—it must be, “ If a man shall trespass against his enemy—kill a wild beast, shoot a bird of prey.” It is not so. “ If thy brother shall trespass against thee.” This man knows what he is talking about, he is familiar with facts, he looks at human life in its actuality. He paints nothing in merely rosy hues, he proceeds upon the assumption that the whole social head is sick and the whole social heart is faint. He who grips funda-

mental facts in this way may possibly have some remedy for the disease which he depicts.

“ If he will not hear thee.” It is impossible—a brother not hearing a brother, a man turning a deaf ear to a fellow-man who goes to expostulate with him, a man hardening himself into an unresponsive stone when the human voice falls upon his ear in piteous and pleading tone! O Christ, thou art now in regions too remote for thy thought to be familiar with—so would one talk about such words as these—but what are the facts of daily life?

Have you met with men who will not listen to you when you go to state your complaint, or to ask for redress, or to demand that simple justice be done? Are there stubborn men, are there deaf souls, are there those who draw themselves up into impenetrable isolation when you wish them to listen to statements which you suppose will correct their judgment and bring their conscience to bear intelligently upon a given set of circumstances? Is the picture correctly drawn?

“ Take with thee one or two more.” How did he, the Christ, know how to treat a social difficulty? If the brother would not hear the one man, how would he possibly hear the one or two more? “ That every word may be established.” Why, would the man go back upon his own word? What need have we of witnesses in social life, especially in Church or Christian life? When a brother has spoken a sentence, he will never surely modify it, recall it, deny it, trifle with it—why should there be one or two more listening, taking notes, and called in for the purpose of verification? Truth is simple, truth is easy, truth will never be denied, truth will stand when all things fall—why should there be one or two more? Have you never felt the necessity of having a witness present when a man was talking who had done a trespass? The very fact that he had done the trespass gave you ground for believing that he would do the further trespass of denying his own word. How he knows us, how he searches us through and through, how his eye burns upon us—there is nothing hidden from the light thereof! A man who talks so about our personal and social relations may have something to say presently of a deeper kind.

“ Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

There is a point at which patience gives out. Jesus Christ points to a similar circumstance in our higher relations—the Lord is long-suffering and very kind of heart, and his eyes are filled with pity and he longs to see us come home, and he has prepared broad welcome for our prodigal, penitent hearts ; yet there is a point at which he says, “Let him alone : this sin hath forgiveness neither in this world nor in that which is to come.” To *God* we may be as a heathen man and a publican, to our *Creator* we may be an eternal offence. This is the mystery of life—we may be cast out of our Father’s heart, and be thrown by our own sinful hands beyond the bounds of penitence and forgiveness.

Jesus Christ then says that whenever a process is conducted in this fashion and the final word is spoken, be it a word of binding or of loosing—whatever is done rightly upon earth is done also in heaven. The earthly books on which the transaction is written may be burned, but the registry above is beyond the reach of fire. Not only so, he says that where the right process is conducted, and two or three come together to settle the matter, there he is. This matter is not settled in stubbornness and resentfulness or in a spirit of social injustice, but it is done religiously ; where two or three are gathered together in my name, to cut off any man or to take any man back again into the fold which he has left, there am I in the midst of them. This passage has been quoted in reference to prayer meetings, and in reference to small religious gatherings, and has been misquoted so as to bring in the words, “and that to bless.” Jesus Christ is not speaking about such meetings—his subject is altogether different ; it is solemnly and graciously true of every meeting of hearts for the purpose of worshipping God through Christ ; but in this instance Jesus Christ is speaking about another subject altogether, and therefore the text must not be wrested from its immediate application to bear but a secondary reference to other sets of circumstances. He would rather not be present when any man is accounted a heathen man and a publican—but he *must* be there. He is *Judge* as well as Saviour.

Peter now interposes and shows that he knows nothing about human nature. We see how grand Christ is by seeing how pitifully little every other man is in comparison. Peter comes

forward with a half-question, based upon a half-view of human nature : “ How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him ? ” The question is founded upon a foolish assumption. You do not know how high the mountain is till you see some other mountain and set it up against it shoulder to shoulder. Mont Blanc does not impress strangers who visit the neighborhood for the first time—they are rather surprised that the mountain is not higher. But let them climb the old king’s shoulder, and one by one how the mountains are left behind, as the traveller goes up into awful solitude. So with this Christ. We could have read this passage ending with the words “ There am I in the midst of them,” and never felt its grandeur ; but when we hear Peter, our own brother, who ought to have known all about human nature, we feel ashamed of him. “ How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him ? ”—the self-complacent dog ! “ My brother sin against *me* ? ” Just like us ! It never occurred to Peter that he might sin against his brother. Standing there in conscious perfectness of character and disposition, will and thought, godly man, serene and most pious soul, he wonders how often *he* has to play the great man by forgiving somebody else ! He starts from a wrong point. The question is not an innocent one, it is steeped in guilt if he did but know it ; but whoever assumes his own peccability, who ever starts the question from the possibility that *he* may be the offender ?

Peter further discloses his littleness by making a suggestion as to the number of times—“ till seven times ? ” Now let us look at Mont Blanc and see how far this little molehill compares advantageously with the infinite majesty. “ I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.” My thought is not your thought, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

The answer *appals* me, the answer *rejoices* me. You have in this sentence an illustration of the severity and the goodness of God. We are called upon to forgive the repentant brother until seventy times seven. If he turn saying, “ I repent,” forgive him. How oft ? a countable number of times ? No, an uncountable number of times ! Therein is the discipline most severe. Why, then, does the text rejoice me ? In this way ; because if *God* asks so

much from *me*, what will *he* be prepared to be and to do himself in reference to my repentance? I will point out his own words if the argument should grow very serious and high—laying my finger upon this celestial arithmetic, how I might plead with him! The Lord is slow to anger, plenteous in forgiveness. He multiplies to pardon; it is not a thin transparent wave he allows to flow over the black stone of my sin, but sea upon sea, Atlantic upon Atlantic he pours upon that blackness, letting it be found no more for ever. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon, with multiplied forgiveness, wave upon wave, billow upon billow of forgiving love, and our sin shall be as a stone cast into the depths of the sea.

Out of this reasoning Jesus brings the flower of a parable about the kingdom of heaven being likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants. Search that parable and you will see that the kingdom of heaven puts forward rights and claims, and insists upon their being met. There is no trifling with the law of righteousness in this parable: no mere bubble of sentiment is this, but a living thing with a living claim. He who has nothing to pay must be sold, and payment must be made. Read this parable further, and you will see that whilst righteous claims are set forth the spirit of mercy is consulted. “Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.” Observe, there is nothing sentimental here; the debt is acknowledged, payment is promised, patience is invoked, and the king, grand in imperial majesty, becomes grander still in moral clemency. So the flower is rooted in the rocks, and the rocks are rooted in the sun, and the sun is rooted in God.

We need not pursue the bad servant, who, being forgiven himself failed to forgive another; we must hasten to the solemn word which closes the parable. “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” There can be no doubt, then, whatever as to the operation of this law of retribution and pardon—a child can understand this parable; no secret wizardry or black art prevents us from seeing God’s meaning in this great matter of human forgiveness. There is no grammatical puzzle in the interpretation of this parable; do not seek to find any way out of it; it comes to one of

two things ; either forgive for Christ's sake and be forgiven, or do not forgive and be not forgiven.

Wondrous is the word, "If ye from your hearts." Forgiveness is sometimes an affair of the lips, pardon is accompanied with a thousand reservations. I know of no men so disinclined to forgiveness as professing Christians. How barbarians do I cannot tell, but professing Christians cannot forgive. Ministers of the gospel there are who have never known the joy of having forgiven a brother man. They forgive with parentheses, they forgive with great big *ifs* following the reluctant words. They will forgive but not forget, they will watch, they will wait, they will hope, they will even hope for the best, but it will take a long time to restore confidence ! Marvellous Christianity,—evangelical *doctrine*, diabolical *temper*. Spotless orthodoxy,—black, hideous devilism. Forgiveness should be the *delight* of Christian men. Forgiveness must be based upon repentance—there must be confession or there cannot be pardon. "But if thy brother turn again, saying, I repent, forgive him"—do not take six months to see how he behaves ; *you* must behave well. "If thy brother turn again saying "I repent, forgive him." Do not say, "It will be a long time before the old love comes back"—where would you be this day if God forgave you with a distinct intimation that he was going to withhold his old love ? Happy he who can pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." That is the crux of prayer,—that is the supreme difficulty of intercession !

### HOMILETIC NOTE ON THE PARABLE.

*Verses 23-35.*—The principal ideas suggested by this parable are :—  
 1. The kingdom of heaven recognises individual *responsibility*,—a king would take account of his servants ; 2. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of *justice*,—"his lord commanded him to be sold," etc. (verse 25) ; 3. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of *mercy*,—"the lord of that servant was moved with compassion ;" 4. The kingdom of heaven teaches that *personal obligation* should become a *social benefit*,—he who has been forgiven should forgive ; 5. The kingdom of heaven having failed in mercy will have recourse to absolute justice,—"his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him."

## LXXIV.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, how wonderful is thy word, and how dull is our understanding ! We come that we may be inspired to read thy word, which is itself inspired, that so we may know its meaning and feel its gentle power. Thy word is truth ; but what is truth ? Behold, it is higher than the firmament, and brighter than all the stars. Help us to yearn after it in its own spirit, to cry mightily for it in earnest and believing desire ; and satisfy us with daily revelation as thou dost feed us with daily bread.

We have come into thine house to find here what we cannot find other where. This is the house of our Father, the place of the shining of his countenance, and in this holy sanctuary is there rest for those that are ill at ease. Here thou dost cause the weary to sit down awhile that they may recover their breath, and here thou dost bind that which was broken down and heal it with heaven's own health. Here thou dost speak to the heart in tenderest music, and here thou withholdest nothing of the gospel that can redeem and liberate from its burden and its torment, and turn every affliction of life into a new and hopeful sacrament. This thou dost in Jesus Christ, in whom, indeed, thou doest all things. Centre of all, Sum and Total of all, Alpha, Omega, Beginning, Ending, Root and Branch, behold it is in him alone that we may find every answer to every question. On his shoulder is the key of the house of David, and in him is all authority and light. We have reconciliation by him, he speaks of forgiveness, from his lips we hear most tenderly and fully of all thy love, and to him we come for every answer to our sorrow, and for deliverance, complete and final, from the pressure of our sin.

How wonderful is thy way ! Behold thy Son is God and Man—Emmanuel, God with us. We cannot understand thee nor follow thee, and the poor line of our reason cannot sound the infinite fathoms of thy great wisdom. Thou hast made the dust into man ; the crumbled bread into a sacrificial body ; the wine left in the cup thou hast reddened into atoning blood ; of the Virgin thou hast made the Mother ; of Three thou hast made One, and of One Three. So dost thou contradict our reason and abase it with painful humiliation ; and yet above all dost thou reign in indivisible unity, Sovereign of the universe and Father of all. Lift up our thought to thyself ; give it enlargement and ennoblement ; save us from all mean conceptions and unworthy views of thyself and thy universe ; give us that bold and quiet and noble view and hold of all things which thou alone canst give, for thou only hast the keys of all power.

We have come to bless thee : one, sweetly, with subdued voice and pensive tone, and others with trumpets and instruments of brass, loud and ringing, because thou hast done great things for them ; but for one purpose we have all come : the bruised reed to bless thee for healing, the smoking flax to thank thee that thou hast not extinguished its dying spark ; and all of us who have received much at thine hand have a song with which we would fain equal the gift if we could. Hear, then, we humbly ask thee, the utterance of every heart, the sighing of every spirit, the cry of the weak and the desire of the strong ; and according to our varied necessity let thy blessing come from the sanctuary and rest upon every one of us. Give the feeblest strength, give the meanest a standing before thee which we could have no other where, and let the wanderer feel that the great house door is still open, and the great Fatherly heart still yearning, and that even now the prodigal may return and sit down in his Father's house.

Hear all special praises for household mercies, for business prosperity, for deliverance from entanglements and embarrassments, and for such hopes as make the heart young and strong amid life's burden and storms. Sanctify our afflictions, bring us the nearer together for our momentary separations, and may there be in all our hearts glowing love to him who for us bore the Cross.

Thou knowest what we are, how thou hast made us ; for we are the work of thine hands, and we are not of our own fashioning. Thou knowest our characteristics ; thou knowest our special temptations, peculiar difficulties ; and thou wilt deal gently with the creatures of thine hand, for it is not in all thine heart to judge us with destruction. Lord, have mercy upon us ; Christ, have mercy upon us ; Spirit of the living God, dwell with us ; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, come to our hearts and make them dwellings for the Holy One.

And send sweet messages of love and hope to all for whom we ought to pray. Remember the little sick chamber, curtained and screened because even the light is a pain, and speak to those whose strength is going. When their feet touch the last cold river, may the waters part and stand on heaps, that thy redeemed ones may go through as on dry ground. Pity those who have no pity on themselves—who break their father's and their mother's hearts, who break every commandment and insult every courtesy, and despoil the most sacred associations of life. Only thy gospel, full of redeeming blood and redeeming love, can reach extremities so violent. Go with those who are upon the sea, and give them good voyaging and safe landing. Be with our dear ones who have become our correspondents, who once were our daily companions. The Lord give them favour in the sight of the people by whom they are surrounded, and may their letters to us be letters written with love and filled with light. As for the prisoner and the doomed man and the outcast and the blasphemer, what can we say ? Thou knowest what we ought to say : take it, we pray thee, as said in many words and with many tears, and out of the

infinite fulness of thy grace do thou send us answers that shall make us glad. Amen.

### Matthew xix.

1. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan ;
2. And great multitudes followed him ; and he healed them there.
3. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause ?
4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,
5. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they twain shall be one flesh ?
6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.
7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away ?
8. He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives ; but from the beginning it was not so.
9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery ; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.
10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.
11. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.
12. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb ; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men ; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.
13. Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them.
14. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.
15. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.
16. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?
17. And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good ? there is none good but one, that is, God : but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.
18. He saith unto him, Which ? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness.

19. Honour thy father and thy mother ; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up : what lack I yet ?

21. Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me.

22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful : for he had great possessions.

23. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved ?

26. But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible : but with God all things are possible.

27. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ?

28. And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30. But many that are first shall be last ; and the last shall be first.

### FUNDAMENTAL ANSWERS.

**J**ESUS CHRIST shows himself perfectly familiar with subjects which apparently lay at an infinite distance from the purpose which he came to accomplish. The question of divorce and the salvation of the world would seem to have no connection. Does the Master appear to disadvantage in conversing upon this unfamiliar theme ? Surely he will decline to enter upon it ; he will silently leave it to the scribes, the men of letters, the lawyers, whose business it is to read all the stipulations and arrangements connected with such a subject. He will say, "I do not touch those themes. I have come for quite another purpose, and cannot attend to such questionings as yours." Surely he might have taken that course with some fitness. What does he do ? He answers these men as if he had made the question of divorce

the study of a lifetime. Is there no argument in that fact? Did he require time to consider the knotty question? Did he say, "I would rather evade the subject; but if you press me to its consideration, I must take time to consult the old black-letter law"? They touched the cloud and they evoked lightning; they asked a tempting question and drew upon themselves, happily for the intelligence and direction of the world, a grand revelation. Let us see how Jesus deports himself under such tempting interrogations regarding subjects which appear to lie at an infinite distance from the cross which he came to lift up into a life-tree and a throne.

Jesus Christ goes back to *original* facts and laws. You cannot settle anything by mere detail. No man can come wisely into a great controversy or a great study at some intermediate point. Herein it is that we lose so much, and so often stultify and disappoint ourselves, by imagining that we can come into a case in the middle of it—that we can understand a controversy or a dispute by looking at any one solitary point in it. Jesus Christ here shows what we have had occasion to point out, that he is fundamental in his teaching, original in his conceptions—that he stands back at the right point for taking in the whole field; and unless a man shall stand at a proper distance from a picture he cannot rightly view it, and unless he shall stand at the right point in history and in divine purpose, he cannot take in all the firmament of God's light and dignity.

See, then, how Jesus Christ does not ask questions about particular persons and particular circumstances, but how he goes right back to the origin and start of things, and says everything must be judged by the divine purpose and by the divine intent and revelation. How grand he is, therefore, in moral tone! How he shakes off all vexing and petty details, and stands squarely and firmly on an eternal rock! How comes it that we have so much shilly-shallying in the Church and various views and little disputes, and narrow and vexing controversies? Simply because we undertake to deal with *details* instead of going back to the *beginning* and ascertaining, so far as we may, the clear purpose and intent of God.

Having told them, "Have ye not read that he which made

them at the beginning, made them male and female?" they said unto him, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" That would puzzle him : he was but a peasant. He had not gone into such knotty questions or pursued such intricate inquiries as these. Now he will be nonplussed, and stand in humiliating attitude. Look at him : have they smitten him dumb? Is there no more lightning in that cloud? Swiftly he answers, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." He knew all about the domestic law ; he was as familiar with it as if he had been a lawyer for half a century or more ; he knew what Moses had written. He answered on the spot. This was not written after three months' consideration : the whole word was *in* him. Moses drew the word from *him*, and he who was the Original could best account for the transcript.

Wonderful, too, in point of philosophic grasp and moral sympathy! "Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives." We have to do some things *expeditely*; we have to make arrangements to meet peculiar circumstances. The divine law sometimes takes a singular bend, so to say, in order to gather up certain peculiar human circumstances, and otherwise unmanageable eccentricities. Sometimes the divine law stoops to pick us up and give us another chance, for there is mercy always in supreme and complete righteousness.

"But do not mistake," said Christ, "a *temporary arrangement* for an *original purpose*. Do not turn the exception into the rule. Do not make the subordinate into the supreme. From the *beginning* it was not so." How did he know? He *was* the Beginning! "I am Alpha and Omega!" From the first it was not so. When God made them male and female, no thought of a divorce was in his mind ; this was *forced* upon the universe by the blasphemy of the heart, by the impiety, the recklessness, the violence of that which was almost divine at the beginning. This is the sour wine, this the spoiled milk, this the blackness of unimaginable sin.

No interpretation can be complete or profound which does not go back to the *beginning*. No man can understand the Apocalypse who has not read the book of Genesis. You cannot come into the

Bible about the middle of it, and begin to form an opinion of the divine revelation by reading some of the minor prophets. Revelation is a whole. It has a first word—a beginning ; and you must begin with the beginning and go steadily and calmly through the whole unfurlment of the divine thought, if you would have any grasp of it that will stand you in good stead amid the temptations of the Pharisees, and amid the insinuations and malign assaults of the enemy.

Would we know what *man* is? We must go back to the beginning. I cannot consult the anatomist as to what man is. Human nature is not a modern discovery ; the human heart is not a yesterday's trick in mechanism. Man is old, and I must go back to his birthday, and study him from the germ, if I can, that I may know his true meaning in the universe of God. Would I know what the *Sabbath* is? I must not read some modern tract about it, or some recent attack upon it, nor must I consult the convenience of to-day about it. If I want to know what the Sabbath is, I must go back to the *beginning*: and in the beginning it was God's day, God's rest, God's festival, God's rounding off and sphering out of labour and creation and service and sacrifice. So it must ever be, or it ceases to be a sabbath day at all, and becomes a mere ecclesiastical expedient to be twisted thus and so and otherwise, according to the suggestion of the moment. We become confused amidst details and cross-workings, and the only true philosophical way of dealing with Man, with Marriage, with Life, with Law, is to go as far back as we can towards the *beginning*, that we may take in field enough and set every object of contemplation in its proper perspective, and bring to bear upon it the only light which can reveal its proportions.

So with the idea of *Sacrifice*. Is it not possible for men to discuss sacrifice by beginning with the epistle to the Hebrews? Do not many persons attempt to settle the question of sacrifice by quoting individual and isolated texts? How then shall I understand this subject of sacrifice? By going back to the *beginning*. What was there in the beginning? This! A Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Not an after thought, not an incident in history, not something measurable by our terms representative of time ; but the original thought, the heavenly purpose, the atonement before the sin! If the Cross had only come up as an

incident in history, then Christ's death might have been a murder ; but with the shadow of the Cross flung across the firmament from the *beginning*, we have the mystery and the sanctity of sacrifice. Do not let us suppose, therefore, as Christian students, that we can settle any question, say even of divorce, or of domestic life or business relationships or church appointments, by coming into it about the middle or the end. We can only get the right grip of it and the right look of it by going back to the beginning, and setting ourselves as far as possible in opposition to the revealed appointments of God. We will return to this after considering the next two incidents.

In the next incident there is a very tender scene. Such a lily is not to be painted. They brought unto " him little children that he should put his hands on them and pray :"—that is, their mothers brought the little children. Observe, they were *brought* ; they did not come of themselves. Some of us are *carried* to God, some of us are brought in loving arms to Christ. We want to bring all men to Jesus. You have been sinning all these years, and your wife says, " I will take him to Christ to-day in some great big prayer bolder than I have ever yet ventured to hurl at the very gate and throne of Heaven. I will *carry* him to-day." O woman, grand heart ! she is going to do it by persuasive violence, by gentle force. You, again, are a black sheep in the family. Your mother says she will *carry* you to Christ ; she says she will believe for you if he will let her : she has so much faith she thinks that she could even include *you* in the sweep of her trustful belief. O man, young man, man of the black, thankless heart, think of that ! She wants to believe for you—to stretch her faith so that it will include both herself and you ! That ought to melt you into tears and bring you broken-heartedly, with infinite contrition, to your mother and to your Saviour. Bring your little children to church, but do not make a burden or a punishment of it. Make them happy in the church—make the church the very sunniest place they can go to : *bring* them, don't *force* them—draw them by love and by many a promise, and let the mother and the father and the preacher combine as often as possible to make the church its own attraction.

Why was Jesus so fond of these little ones ? Did he pick out

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all the beautiful children, and say, "I would like to touch that one," and "Do let me speak to that sweet child"? No : that is our selfishness. If you were going to make a home for little children, you would take nobody into it, if you could help it, but the pretty ones. That is not philanthropy ; that is *selfishness* with a religious visor on. You gave the child a shilling, a toy, a kiss, because it was *comely*. Ah, you gave *yourself* the toy ; you kissed yourself in that mean act. What did Jesus do? Sought out the lost, and if he gave one child a sweeter kiss and a tenderer embrace than another, I know, by what else I have seen of him, that it was the ugly child, the shapeless, deformed one, the child that had fewest friends, the little creature that was cared least for. That was love : such love was Christ's.

But why did he gather all these little flowers to him and bind them to his breast? Does he give any reason for this? He does : "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." Oh, how he warmed to that kingdom in every aspect of it! When you are in a foreign land, and you hear any one speaking English, you say, "How sweet! how home-like! I know that mother tongue ; I like the tone all the better for hearing it in this dreary country, of the language of which I do not know one word." And if he, the Christ of God, saw down here in this rough climate any flower such as he had seen grow upon the heavenly slopes, what wonder if he bent over it and bestowed upon it tenderest and fondest interest. This was Jesus Christ's reason : whatever represented the kingdom of heaven was precious to him ; wherever he saw any trace or hint of it there he was in the fulness of his sympathy and in all the tenderness of his music.

What was it that Jesus Christ loved in these little ones? He loved the *life*. When shall we come to the proper conception of that boundless term? The little ones *lived* ; that was enough. Society will not allow you to destroy even a child one hour old. The magistrate and the judge will lay severe hands upon you if you take away the life of a child that has just breathed. Why? It knows nothing, it can answer no question, it can make no appeal in words ; and yet society rises up in indignation, with flushed face, with clenched hands, if some poor woman should stop the life she feels can only be a tragedy, and may possibly end in hell. If the *magistrate* is so anxious about life, if society is

so protective of its little ones, shall the *church* take any lower view?

The next case is not out of keeping with the former. Then came one “and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” What does Jesus Christ do? Goes back to the *beginning* as in the two former cases—God’s purpose in the case of divorce, the kingdom of heaven in the case of the little children, and God in the case of this young man. Jesus Christ goes back to the beginning of *character*,—law; Jesus Christ goes back to the beginning of *law*,—the commandments. He treats nothing in mere detail. He will not be vexed and distracted by momentary questions; he stands at the fount and origin of things and reads all life in the light of the divine purpose. Understand that all the great questions of human life have been answered from the *beginning*. The young man proposed the question as if some *new* answer were about to be given. God has no new answer to give to any man. All great questions of the heart were answered before the heart began to speak. As sacrifice antedated sin, so the law antedated all character. Do not imagine that God has left all the great questions of the heart to be answered until now. All questions have been replied to, all light has been given that is necessary for the beginning of our superior and supreme education.

The young man had kept all the commandments, and yet he had not kept one of them! Is it possible to be so contradictory? It is not only possible, it is actual in every life. We keep things in the letter and we break them in the spirit. A man may possibly be right in letters and syllables beyond all just impeachment, and yet in the spirit he may be breaking every law which he apparently embodies. A man is not necessarily in church when he is merely bodily present there. It is possible to be in church in the body and at the same moment to be a thousand miles away from the altar, transacting business that has but a very questionable relation to the sanctuary.

In all these cases the *disciples* have something to say; and, as usual, they belittle every occasion. You do not, I repeat, know how grand Christ is as a talker till you hear the piping, whining voice of the disciples. You may listen to Christ so much that you

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think every other voice is as his own in fulness and music, suggestiveness and colour and sympathy. Not until you hear some other man speak do you know how grand was the voice of God's Christ. Now, let us hear the disciples : their remarks will be instructive by their feebleness.

Having heard the Master speak about divorce, the disciples say unto him, " If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." " Fools," said Christ, " you do not know what you are talking about." You cannot set aside the great pressures of nature—you cannot set aside the original law and force of things. It is not for man to say, " If that be so, then I think I will do something else." Man is caught within the sweep of a mighty law, and he cannot rid himself of the gravitation which God has brought to bear upon him to keep him in his right place. " It is good for a man not to marry." It is no such little humanity that Jesus Christ came to pamper and build up. Jesus came to make men. God said, " Let us make *man* ;" and, in the doing of that, he must pass through a thousand trials, and fight his way to conquest and tranquillity.

Then the disciples intervene in the case of the little children. The disciples rebuked them, the disciples forbade them, the disciples severally and jointly shook their heads at them. Oh, how these disciples do belittle whatever they touch ! How they throw discord into the music that was sweeping like a heaven-filling wind from the mouth of Christ, the great Revealer and Teacher ! We do too much *forbidding* work. There we commit many grave errors, and set up many hindrances in the way of honest and noble men. We think that if we put our *veto* upon something we have exercised a very noble function. The church should not love to forbid so much as to encourage. If the disciples could have said, " Behold, little children are being brought to our King ; make way, stand back for the army of the little and the beautiful," they would have risen to something like the grandeur of the occasion. But they were afraid of noise ; they did not like children to cry in church. As if Jesus Christ had committed to memory some very beautiful literary piece as a recitation which he was about to pronounce to the people, and he might be hampered, and forget where he was, and the whole thing would be lost ! But he was the Life. He would have turned the cry into a prayer ; he would

have founded upon the child's unconscious laughter some grand hope. When shall we speak the Master's language with the Master's accent ?

The disciples intervene in the third instance. And Peter said, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ?" How this man drags the stars out of heaven and tramples upon them ! How he debases the ideality of life, the prophecy and the apocalypse of human being and education ! "We have forsaken all ;" and an *all* it was to forsake—a few nets that required mending, an old boat that was not seaworthy : they had forsaken ALL !

Have you left all, and done it with the right motive and with a right, strong, healthy heart ? Then I promise you, in Christ's name, kingdom and honour enough, in so far as the cause was just and the motive good.

How Jesus answered the man ! Read the twenty-eighth and the twenty-ninth verses, and you will find a cataract of promise and pledge and gift in reply to a man who had left his broken nets and his poor ship. Yet the thirtieth verse says, "Remember, there are many that are first that may be last, and the last may be first." Do not count upon all this property you are going to have until you have lived worthy of your great vocation. At the last you may fall, and he who left all at the first with a wrong motive may get nothing at the last, and so may be a pauper at both ends.

Christ is equally great, whether in answering his enemies or his friends. Bold, complete, dignified, he answers, not as if struggling with a *problem*, but as if granting a *revelation* !

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### SELECTED NOTES.

*Verse 7.*—The sphere of Law is not the same with that of Duty. Many things are *right*, which are not to be sought by *force*; and many things are *wrong*, which are not to be thus prevented. Law may permit a *wrong*, lest by prohibiting it a greater *wrong* should be produced. The text of the law was interpreted differently by the Jewish lawyers. To the question proposed, the school of Hillel said, Yes ! and the school of Schammai, No ! Deut. xxiv. 1.

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*Verse 10.*—This section is peculiar to St. Matthew. The same term is used both literally and figuratively. There were some who might serve men and God better in the unmarried state ; but only some.

*Verse 13.*—Christ did not baptize the children, and he never baptized grown persons. He declared that children shared with adults the holy instruction and influence, the safety and blessedness, of the kingdom of Heaven. He taught that they were to be received and recognised by his disciples, as those to whom the kingdom of Heaven belonged. And he showed that symbolical services and prayers were proper and profitable for them.

From the arrangement of the three Evangelists it appears that this conversation took place in the last journey to Jerusalem.

*Verse 16.*—The contents of this division are closely connected, and the first three sections are common to the three Evangelists, the last being peculiar to St. Matthew. In reply to the question proposed, our Lord first exposes a fundamental error : all good is to be received from God, who only is independently good. He then refers to the rule, which rightly applied would lead to the right cause. And finally he points to his own example, which all disciples were to follow in principle, and some in voluntary poverty.

*Verse 23.*—The disciples supposed that riches would be aids to, and rewards in, the kingdom of Christ, as in earthly kingdoms ; and they were surprised to learn that they were hindrances, to be surrendered, not sought for.

*Verse 28.*—There would be great rewards ; but not of the *kind* expected, nor according to the supposed *rule*. The new creation is in the future. Acts iii. 21 ; Rom. viii. 19 ; 2 Peter iii. 13 ; Rev. xxi. 1. A similar promise to the Apostles is found, Luke xxii. 30.

## LXXV.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee for all special days and sacred memories : they come to stimulate and encourage us in all holy things. We have seen the blackness of one day, its great cross and all its appalling solemnity, and now we stand in the brightness of a cloudless sky, rejoicing that the Lord is not in the tomb, but that he is risen and is our Priest for evermore. We bless thee for seeing an open grave—the tomb has been the great mystery of our experience, and the great pain and wonder of our forecast of life. We knew not what it was, but thou hast opened it and delivered the captive and set him on high and crowned him with immortality and infinite glory, and they that are Christ's shall be brought with him at the last : thou wilt leave no grave unsearched, and thy jewels shall be gathered together. All thy buried ones shall awake and arise and come forth out of the dust, and them that sleep in Jesus thou wilt bring with him.

For all such hope we bless thee. This is a sure confidence and a source of exceeding strength. So now we can say, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? ” It was but a moment's victory, to be overcome with everlasting conquest, for death is swallowed up and the grave for ever forgotten. Help us to believe these sacred truths, to treasure them in our hearts, to draw from them inspiration in the time of weakness and fear and desolation, so that we may have songs in the night time and know not the pain and loneliness of orphanage. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort us ; thou holdest a great light over the valley of the shadow of death ; thou dost deliver with mighty deliverances all who put their whole trust in thy power and wisdom. This is our joy, our song, our unutterable delight, our ineffable peace. Lord, root us and ground us in these truths, and no stone shall fall upon us but to do us good ; and the coming of death shall be the coming of our deliverer.

Do thou give us to know the joy of resurrection in the heart. Raise again every buried hope, revive every tender affection, give life again to all our noblest resolutions and purest ambitions. May we, now bending before thine altar, remember the words of love and loyalty which we uttered to thee in the days now far gone ; and; recalling every one of these, with tender recollection and fondest gratitude, may we now rise into newness of life and be clothed with ever-enlarged affection towards thyself ; may our service be stimulated by all that is noble in our own recollection, as well as all that is gracious in thy tender love.

Grant blessings unto the homes which we now represent. Come to every life that is here and to every spirit that is present, and reveal thyself in tender glory. Thou wilt not dazzle us with intolerable light : thou wilt shine upon us with subdued splendour, so that we may be able to bear the revelation and enjoy it, and feel in its warmth the prophecy of a still broader and warmer summer. Deliver us from all evil, we humbly pray thee, in the name and strength of him who to-day rose again from the dead. May his power be in our hearts, may his grace rule our spirits, may his love be the secret of our devotion and the defence of our character—may we in all things seek to glorify Christ, and to have no other purpose or ambition in the world.

For all thy tender care our life long we bless thee. Our first breath was thine, our last thou wilt take unto thyself ; and all the days between thou wilt make precious by thy presence and memorable by thy redemptions and deliverances. Give us confidence, we humbly pray thee, in these solemn land gracious truths—then shall our hearts be quiet and shall cease from fear, and our life shall be profoundest peace.

Let thy blessing rest upon the land. God save the Queen, spare her life and increase her comfort and her joy. Direct all who lead our sentiment, and give us our attitude amongst the nations of the earth. Be with all great men, with all rulers, judges, magistrates, and persons in authority, with all who direct our thinking and lead our sentiment, and grant unto every man the assurance that his work is blest from on high. Disappoint those whose hearts are set on mischief, overrule events upon which we can exercise no decisive control, unfold our life unto us day by day, keep us from all impatience and impious curiosity, subdue within us the penetration that would spoil thy secrecy and transgress the mysteries of thy government ; give us a holy resignation, a spirit of waiting, a calm assurance of faith, and the end shall see the meaning of it all, and in doing so thou wilt increase our love and heighten our song. Amen.

### Matthew xx. 1-16.

1. For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place,

4. And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way.

5. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle ?

7. They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto

them, Go ye also into the vineyard ; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more ; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good-man of the house,

12. Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong : didst not thou agree with me for a penny ?

14. Take that thine is, and go thy way ; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ?

16. So the last shall be first, and the first last : for many be called, but few chosen.

### THE LARGER JUSTICE.

WE cannot understand this parable by itself : it is the puzzle of all persons who come upon it without paying any attention to the circumstances which led up to it. You see from the grammatical construction of the first verse that this parable belongs to something else—“ *For* the kingdom of heaven is like unto.” We must therefore ask, What has given occasion to this method of presenting the kingdom of heaven ? Peter had put a selfish question. Having heard Christ’s speech about the rich man and his infinite difficulty in entering into the kingdom of God, Peter said to Jesus, “ Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ? ” He wanted his Christianity to *pay*, his eye was wandering in the direction of results, he wanted the *quid pro quo*. Now the parable was meant to show that the kingdom of heaven is not founded upon rules of barter : it is like unto a householder who proceeded upon a larger principle than had yet been tried, a principle which created antagonism at first, but which in the end vindicated itself.

Looking at this parable within its own limits, looking at it from

a mere trade point of view, regarding it in the light of what we call political economy, it is absurd ; it touches the sense of justice very sharply in every man, and we are prepared to stand beside those who complain, and to say that they have a strong point in their favour. But the whole object of the parable is to show that there is to be no bargaining about the kingdom of heaven : it is not a question of time, of pennies, of understandings and covenants that can be measured in the market-place. By this parable Jesus Christ lifts the kingdom of heaven right away above all trade considerations and all economical criticisms, making a new thing of it altogether, and carrying itself up into a larger and completer justice than could be measured by our arithmetics and reckonings and commercial laws. God has one reward for all—he gives to every man a penny—the last is as enriched as the first, and the first as the last—so it seems to be. Yet it is not so. Jesus here takes delight in confounding us, utterly turning upside down all our favourite calculations and canons of justice and rules of barter. From end to end he upsets our regulations and calculations, and it was his delight to do so, to mystify and bewilder us, and to bring in a householder who contradicted every rule of every trade and every instinct of limited justice.

Has God only one reward for all ? So in very deed it would seem from this parable. Do you tell me that the martyrs who went up to heaven in chariots of fire shall have no more than the child that died in its mother's arms with a believing prayer, who had never encountered one difficulty or endured one great trial for Christ ? Has the martyr a penny and the child a penny equally ? Shall the old worn-out missionary, who has gone to heathen lands and suffered all the dangers of travel and the perils of climate, and all the difficulties of strange relationship—shall he have no more than the man who has never gone out of his own country, but who has enjoyed Christianity as presented by and defended by the highest and richest civilisation of his day ? Has each to have but the bare penny ? So it would seem on the face of this parable, and yet there is not a word of truth in that representation. The martyr, and the man who has died in what may be called the luxury of Christianity, *cannot* have the same in reality, though they may have the same in mere denomination of quantity.

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Therein is a mystery easy of explanation, not, perhaps, easy to be set out in so many words ; but the martyr and the non-martyr, each receiving his penny, have not received the same, except in mere nominal value. We are rewarded as we go. We get a victory in every fight, we have a heaven every sunset ; we are paid by the hour, by the moment, by the breathing. We get what we can receive, we are rewarded according to our *capacity*, and we are not at liberty, according to this parable, to estimate things by hours and by pennies and by time spent, but by another law which comes into revelation and operation oftentimes beyond the limits of mere words, so that we cannot explain the law to a man who has not actually lived under its beneficent operation.

God will not have our calculations in the church. He says the first shall be last and the last first—what does he mean ? Does he mean, in a merely literal sense, that he will put Judas in the place of Peter and Peter in the place of Judas, and thus perform a little fantastic trick in arrangement and gradation in his kingdom ? No. What, then, does he mean ? To expel the whole system of reckoning from his church—to banish arithmetic, and all that little, dwarfed, mistaken reasoning that pretends to say how things should be in the eternal sphere. He takes your arithmetic out of your hand, and says, “ Make no use of this in the church.” He takes your dried-up, desiccated reason, that adds two and two, and says they make four, and he says, “ They do not, in the church : such reckoning in the market-place may be right enough, but in the church none of your two-and-two reasoning ; another law, wider and higher, and all-comprehending, must rule the spirit and the administration of things Christian.” How, then, we are snuffed out, and how our knuckles are rapped by the iron rod, and how we are beaten back when we come to reckon up things by numbers and gradations and appointments, and all the arrangements of the Heavenly hierarchy ! We are reasoning by arithmetic, and Christ says, “ He who has worked from sunrise to sundown shall have a penny : he who has worked only one hour towards the westering of the sun shall have a penny. The first shall be last and the last first.” He takes delight in confounding our reckoning and making confusion of our mighty reasonings. If he did so in this parable only, it might be difficult to maintain the position, but it is the rule of his universe. Thus you say it was

unjust on the part of the man to give those labourers who came in at the eleventh hour as much as was given to those labourers who went out early in the morning. Are you sure that your notion of the word *just* is right? May not the word “*just*” be a larger word than you have yet realized? May we not need larger and truer definitions of common terms in order to enable us to rise to the height of these great Christian arguments? Consider whether there is not a point in that suggestion.

But see, and tell me how your idea of “*just*” vindicates itself under such circumstances as these. Here is a child a day old, and that child is tainted with a disease for which itself is in no degree accountable. Its life will be a pain, its days will be a burden, its future will be a cloud, and yet the little one is in no degree responsible for the tremendous and insufferable infliction under which it groans. Is that *just*? And yet it is a *fact*. God will not accept our little ideas of justice: he always rebukes them. They are too narrow, they are too shallow, they do not bring in all the terms and elements which belong to the subject. We see within the limits of a *day*, we draw a little circle around us, and call that little circumference the sum-total of all things. God will show us a *wider* revelation some day: he will give us a right scale of measurement, and then we shall know that what we thought was injustice was but one section of a grand whole. He will “vindicate eternal providence and justify his ways to men.”

Take, again, the notion of sin and everlasting punishment, and see the very principle of this parable in active operation there. Let the case stand thus. Take what notion you please of the words “everlasting punishment”—let them mean everlasting destruction, complete annihilation, or eternal torment; the definition of these terms has no relation to what I am now about to say—but take them in any sense, and then answer whether it is *just* that a man who has lived a few years in a world he never asked to come into, and who has sinned those few years all through, staining every moment of them with blackness—what are the moments but a handful, what are the days but a sharp sudden breathing and all is over, a spasm and the life is forgotten—and yet for these few days’ sinning he shall be thrust into a lake of fire, shut up there for ever to burn in eternal consciousness of pain, or shall be *snuffed*, obliterated out of the universe, or shall

die a lingering and painful death in some hidden hell? Where is the proportion? There is none.

The parable is written upon all the economies of God's administration. If it were a question of arithmetic, a question of *quid pro quo*—thus much sin and thus much punishment—there could be no proportion between the sin possible to a man in all his seventy years if he never slept an hour, if he cursed God in every throbbing moment of the seventy years—there could be no proportion between that short blasphemy and infinite duration of penalty. So the Lord teaches us in this parable that we must not begin to reckon, and to audit God's ways, and to carry forward sums, and bring up additions, and make an arithmetical calculation of his providence and his way. The first shall be last and the last first—the missionary shall have nominally as much as the man who never went from home, and the martyr shall have the same penny in mere name that is given to the man who lived a life of Christian ease, useful enough within its own limits, but without one pang of martyr fear, without one throb of martyr suffering.

So the parable is not written here once for all. It is the parable of the universe, it is the mystery of providence; it shows itself as vividly in the higher and nobler aspect of reward as in the aspect of punishment. What relation, arithmetical or statistical, is there between *believing* and *eternal life*? Some men seem as if they could *not help* believing. It comes, in a sense hardly to be explained, natural to them to go to church and to believe and to be good. They seem to have no individual Devil that tears their life in twain every day, that blows away with hot hell-breath their devotional breathings at the throne of the heavenly grace. They are not tortured, torn, mangled, pursued, but they fall with easy grace into ways that are good. What relation is there between their believing and eternal honour, Heavenly paradises, celestial inheritances, immeasurable duration of bliss? Why, if they had believed the moment they breathed, and if they had been singing hymns all their life, and doing deeds of charity through all the cycle of the seventy years, what relation could there possibly be between seventy years, how crowned soever with service and sacrifice, and innumerable millions of ages of reward? There is no relation. You cannot find out God to perfection in this matter, you cannot search him with arithmetic, you cannot make his ways

equal by statistical schedules, your barter laws are not known here. This is the great mystery of life—a revelation of a wider justice, a glimpse of an infinite administration that will not stop to be measured by the measurements of sense and time, and our dwarfed and crippled justice.

Jesus never departs from the spirit of this parable. Wherever we find him, he is living this parable out. Thus : “ How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him ? ” Peter *will* be arithmetical ; he will have two sines in his book ; he is determined to reduce everything to logarithms : “ How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him ? ” and in some mood of charity, very sublime to him, he says, suggestively, “ until seven times ? ” Jesus anticipates this very parable, condenses it into a sentence, says, “ Until seventy times seven.” What is the meaning of that representation ? The evident meaning is that there is to be no *arithmetic* in the church, no reckoning by numbers, no algebraic symbol representing numerical value, no sign for “ equal to ” in all the reckoning of the church. Thus is the justice of God evidently displayed on the one side of life as manifestly as on the other, for he himself will not take a cup of cold water without giving back a cup of wine for it. Where is the relation arithmetical ? There is none. He himself will not be sick and imprisoned and visited without giving all heaven in return. Where is the barter equality ? There is none.

These reflections lead up to the still grander thought that reason as such, in its carnal limitations and possibilities, has no place in the inner and upper sanctuary of divine purpose and thought. There we live by faith, there we say, “ Not my reason be done, but thy justice—not my will but thine be done.”

So, then, we do the work without any reference to the reward. You who came to Christ full fifty years ago will have your penny—as well as the dying thief that had to bring only yesternight one foot out of hell. Will, you, then, be placed on equal terms ? It never *can* be so. Can a man of fine capacity and mind go along any road and have as the result of his walking only that which the common clodhopper has, who “ thought the moon no bigger than his father’s shield, and the visual line that girt him round the world’s extreme ” ? Have they both *equal* enjoyment out of the same cir-

cumstances? It is impossible. The walk to the philosopher is a walk in church, a climbing up the altar stairs. He sees angels, he hears voices, he is touched by reverences, he is in the presence and sanctuary of God. Yet the road the same, the day the same—the road through a garden, the day the queenliest in all the summer train, yet in that walk one man found heaven, the other only a convenient road to a place to sleep in.

So with Christian service. We get out of it according to our capacity. We are rewarded by the *work* itself, and we are to enter into it in the spirit of love, and in no other spirit. Yet ye say the way of the Lord is not equal. Judging him by this parable you would come to false conclusions about the law of the kingdom of heaven. The teaching of the parable is this; no reckoning in numbers, no clever schedule-making in the church, no comparative statistics—banish the whole of them, and live in love. Beware of the statistician in the church: he will mislead you, though he says he takes the prose of facts. Facts may be so represented as to be lies. The statist tells me that our service last year amounted to, say, ten thousand, and our service this year amounts to, say, two thousand, therefore he says we have gone down. He seems to have right upon his side: people say you cannot quarrel with figures. Within given limits that statement is perfectly true, but the limits themselves are wrong. Within given limits the earth stands still, and yet the earth never pauses for one moment. Within given limits you can draw a straight line upon the face of the earth, and yet, really and truly, no line upon a globe can be straight. I must therefore go further in my judgment, and ask under what *circumstances* the two thousand was realized? Circumstances of great depression, circumstances of great trial and trouble, circumstances that made strong men tremble, and hopeful men begin to feel the coldness of a great fear, and under *those* circumstances the result was two thousand. Under what circumstances the ten thousand? Summer all the year round: the earth but touched, and she laughed in flowers and in fruits; the hand but put out, and it brought back riches. Then the two thousand are more than the ten! The first shall be last and the last first!

Let God be judge, and banish foolish talk about the eleventh hour, and the first hour, and the heat and burden of the day, and the penny given to each and all alike. You can make a tale of distress out of it, but in the soul of it God will justify himself.

## LXXVI.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, how can we bless thee for this Jesus Christ, who speaks of himself as the Son of Man? Thus would he come very nearly to us ; calling himself the Son of God he stands away, but calling himself the Son of Man we feel his infinite strength drawing us into his own security. We bless thee every day for the sweetest name of Jesus : it makes the days bright and warm, it brings the summer of Heaven upon all the lands of time, it makes us glad in the night season, and rapturous in the valley. We thank thee for the cross : so ghastly, indeed, and yet so winsome : having no beauty that we should desire it, and yet growing up out of its black root into infinite blossoming and beauty and fruitfulness, the very tree of life set in the midst of the nations. Sacred cross, holy thing, made by man but accepted by God. As thou didst turn the bread into flesh and the wine into blood, so hast thou turned the barren wood into a great living tree.

Thou dost turn all things to higher uses. Behold what manner of love thou hast bestowed even upon us that we should be called the sons of God. And it doth not appear what we shall be : thou dost not reveal our whole future to us in one great breadth of outlook, but day by day, yea, moment by moment, dost thou come to us with some new revealment, some unexpected light, some uncomprehended beauty. Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think : as the Heaven is high above the earth, so are thy thoughts higher than our thoughts. We are lame and blind, we are withered and dead : thou must do the whole miracle, we cannot even pray thee to do it, we can but ask thee dumbly, in the extremity of our helplessness, to do what thou wilt of thy clemency.

Thou always hast compassion. God is love—Jesus wept. Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God, have mercy on us. We would be good, and oh, thou knowest how subtle is the enemy and how hard the road. Our hearts leap up in great prayers and our lives yearn oftentimes to become holy sacrifices unto God, and yet our prayer is stopped ere it reach thee, and our life is killed before it reach the altar. Yet thou knowest it all, there is no surprise in Heaven : thou dost understand our constitution, thou knowest that we are but dust, a wind that cometh for a little time and then passeth away. What is our life? It is a vapour, dying whilst it burns and flickers in the air. Our breath is in our nostrils, we are tottering to the tomb, we are gropers in the darkness, and yet there are

in us passions and impulses, strange forces that terrify us by their energy and their ardour. Surely we shall see the time of revelation, and enjoy the all-brightening light, and know why we are and what we are, and out of all the retrospect we shall gather some grand new hymn ineffable in sweetness, eternal in gratitude.

Look upon us, poor bruised ones : we have come back from the week's fight and we are tired : we have left the week's business and we would think awhile of Heaven. We have left behind us all that could bring down our whole soul to the earth, that we might look up from this place of the altar to the great heights, and inhale the very air of heaven. Pity us : carry the lambs in thy bosom, give special grace and uplifting of heart and hope to the man who wants to be better, and who dreads the return of the curse that slays him. Give light that shall be as a revelation from God to the child doomed to daily embarrassment and perplexity teach those who have knocked at the door and had no answer to knock again, and whilst they stand on the outside do thou speak comfortably to their waiting hearts.

The Lord heal the sick, and be pitiful to those who have no friends, and come in by every door and window to the houses where sits the black desolation. Give the young chastening suited to the enthusiasm of the moment : thou wilt not blow out the light of their hope, thou wilt rather watch it and rekindle it and give it strengthening, till it shall fulfil its type in all the glory of the final revelation.

Look at those who are just going to drink of the cup of happiness, and are afraid it will never reach the lip. Lord, help them to drink deeply, for their life has been a weary one, and one draught of gladness will today lift them up into ecstasy. Be with our dear ones who are not here—in the sick chamber, in the nursery, in the place of sad solitude, on the great sea, far away in the other countries of the globe—building up their homes, and blessing their firesides.

The Lord unite us in the indissoluble fellowship of sympathy with the heart of Christ : wash us in his dear blood, precious blood, blood of sacrifice, blood of atonement. Amen.

### Matthew xx. 17-34.

17. And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

18. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him : and the third day he shall rise again.

20. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21. And he said unto her, What wilt thou ? She saith unto him, Grant

that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

22. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

23. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

24. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

29. And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

30. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

31. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

32. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33. They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

## THE PLAN OF LIFE.

H E had told them this before: he had indeed nothing else to tell them. Whatever else he said belonged to this pathetic and sublime revelation, and was, as compared with it, but as the small dust of the balance. Look what a plan this is. Life is a plan—you will have trouble and grievous unrest and dreams that will plague you like enemies at night, if you do not seize the all-restful idea that life is not a game of chance, but a Divine plan. The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father. Your troubles are all reckoned, your tears are all numbered. The valleys that you

would not have on the road were all excavated by the Divine hand. Every controversy, every cross wind, every cold steep climb up the barren rocks—all is included, fore-appointed, and is part of the Divine purpose. There hath no temptation befallen you but such as is common to man. With every temptation God will make a way of escape. Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, for every trial has its own purpose and its own sweet outcome. He knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me he will bring me forth as gold. This verse has about it all the beauty and massiveness of an architectural fabric : it is not a heap of loose stones, it is a building with shape and polish and high utility. So is your life.

Why then this restlessness and feverishness and miserable discontent? All things work together for good to them that love God. Fear not, little flock : it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. "I am persuaded," said one who spoke soberly and inspiredly, "that he which hath begun a good work in you will carry it on until the day of redemption, completion, and perfectness." There are parts of the plan you do not like, but you must deal with the plan as an entirety, and do not suppose that the unfinished house is the complete building. By-and-by it will be finished, and then God will allow you to say what you think of his high meaning.

Observe this is a *whole* plan, it is not *part* of a design, it is not one little patch plucked out of the pattern—the whole thing is here. I found an argument upon that circumstance. Nothing happened to Christ that is not in this paragraph. What do you make of that? Remember the circumstances, recall and re-live the tragedy, and tell me what you say to this—that nothing occurred in any tittle of incident or throb of pain that is not in this paragraph. The going up, the betrayal, the condemnation, the mocking, scourging, crucifying, rising again—are all gone through before one cruel hand is laid upon him, or one mocker dares spit in that holy face. The man who can so deal with his future cannot be crucified, in any sense that will bring him into despair. He discounts the future ; its tragedies come to him in a sense as commonplaces, its crosses are but punctuations of a literature which he

himself has written, and perused, and approved as to its final outcome and significance. We are troubled because we have no great *outlook*: we take in no field of vision, our life comes into our house in little pieces, in mocking details, and not knowing what is going to come next, we fret ourselves with sore chafing. The one thing we need not know is the *detail*, the great thing we may know is the solemn *wholeness*.

Herein Jesus Christ endeavoured to strengthen the missionaries when he sent them out. We have seen in our examination of the great missionary charge, which he delivered in the tenth chapter of this gospel, that Jesus Christ spread all the future before his agents, told them of the mocking and the scourging and the delivering up to the Councils and banishment from the synagogues—ay, he made the winter of a grievous desolation howl with its bitter winds, before they took a step from the sanctuary of his own presence, and his own immediate protection. That is how to live.

Tell me how is this, that the whole thing is known to Jesus before it is done by the Jews and Gentiles? He was mocked and scourged and spat upon and crucified and reviled, within himself; so when it came to him, he received it with ineffable meekness and acquiescence in the Divine will. He was never *surprised*. He did not turn round and say, “What—this indignity never entered into my contemplation of the sad event: smitten upon the head with a reed, struck on the cheek-bone with a clenched hand, spat upon.”—He never said, “This did not come within my view when I looked upon the scene that was coming.” It was all reckoned, it was all expected, it was all borne with corresponding equanimity,—with the astounding peace which passeth understanding.

Surely he will walk now straight upon this great height, and have no more interruption. Such is not the case. In a moment he is pulled down from his elevation as we have seen him upon former occasions. “Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.” When have we ever seen the occasion kept up throughout his whole purpose and scheme in this life of Jesus Christ? Never. He had never climbed a mount of sublimity from which he is not brought down by some ruthless and mean hand. He was all but

crucified in the nineteenth verse, and in the twentieth verse he is dragged down to answer a question of most selfish ambition. This action on the part of the mother of Zebedee's children shows what *misconstructions* of a Divine plan are possible. We suppose that such and such misconstructions of human purpose never can be conceived. Read the life of Jesus Christ in answer to that vain imagination. It is possible to misconstrue God, it is possible to suppose that God is capable of mean ideas and selfish arrangements in his kingdom. What wonder that you and I should be misunderstood? Is it amazing beyond all imagination that you and I should not be comprehended in our small circle, when we have before us the astounding fact that nearly every word of Jesus Christ's was taken hold of at the wrong end and turned to impious uses?

How was this woman revealed? She was revealed at the point of *unreasonableness*. We may have a thousand fantastic dreamings in our hearts, and a most vile self-consciousness, and no one need know anything about it, but the moment we become *unreasonable* we show what sin really is, in some of its practical relations and aspects. Men who could not understand sin in its *abstract relation* to God, as a spiritual offence, understand it and hate it the moment it assumes the attitude and exercises the prerogative of *unreasonableness*. We understand sin in some parts of its conjugation, not in its reality and essence.

The ten were moved with indignation when they heard of the kingdom being so divided. They were not moved with indignation until the point of *unreasonableness* was reached. We are shocked at *points*; we do not take the right grasp and scope, but we are shocked at detail. It is possible to be more offended by a *discourtesy* than by a *crime*.

What will Jesus Christ do now? He will lift up the occasion back to its grand level. He was never responsible for the lowering of the occasion. The moment he comes into it he lifts it up. In this instance he restored the occasion to its sublime level—hence he laid down the great law of meekness, self-crucifixion, and service in his kingdom. “ Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be

ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." That is the law of greatness in the Divine kingdom.

Observe that in both these instances Jesus Christ speaks of himself as a third person. Great is the mystery and great the graciousness of this Man. Of whom does he speak in the eighteenth verse—"The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes?" Of whom does he speak in the twenty-eighth verse—"Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister?" Why does he not speak directly of himself as *I*? Do we not sometimes relieve our sorrows by this impersonality, by this enlargement of ourselves into representativeness, and do we not sometimes subdue what otherwise might be an ambition by speaking of ourselves as types of a divine class or purpose? He enlarges the occasion by this very use of the third person. Sometimes he said "I—Me" with a wondrous pathos, but he most frequently called himself the Son of Man when he spoke of his suffering and of his glory. He would make all occasions grand: he would never draw pity upon the mere son of the carpenter, he would never have himself, in the littleness of his actuality and personality, wept over and pitied as a mere atom. Whatever answer was made to his appeals must be made not to the local man, not to the Nazarene, not to the individual measurable by the vision that looked upon him, but to the *Son of Man*,—a term yet to be understood. Jesus Christ projects these great phrases, and the ages have to live up to them—the kingdom of heaven, the Son of Man, the Son of God—these are expressions which do not empty upon us their whole meaning at once: they are age-words, they spread themselves over the throbbing æons of all time, and have their ministry for generation after generation until the close comes.

We have spoken of *murmuring* men. We have just had before us two *disappointed* men. Now there come before us two *rejoicing* men. Let us hasten to the sunny side of the history, where the light falls warmly and there is room enough to be glad in. "Behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David." Again observe what has already attracted our attention. No man ever appealed to Jesus Christ for help of

this kind in the name of *justice*. We cannot too strongly keep that fact before the mind ; we have had it again and again in this history, and because it occurs again and again, the comment must be as frequent as the repetition of the incident. The blind men never said, “ We have heard that thou didst cure a leper, therefore in the name of *impartiality* we charge thee to heal us of our blindness.” Every suppliant came to Christ along the line of *mercy*. So it must be to the very end. That God has pardoned one sinner for Christ’s sake is no reason why I should go to him and challenge him in the name of *justice* to be as impartial to me as to other men. There are circumstances in life in which we stand alone, in the solemnity of perfect individualism, every man carrying his own burden, every man stung by his own sin, every man burnt in a hell of his own, and out of the pit of his own particular distress he must vehemently call upon God in the sweet name of mercy.

Humanity asserts itself in these great cries ; in pain, in want, in helplessness, in conscious desolation, the soul is lifted above mere technicality. Trust the soul in those high moods of conscious need, confronting the great Giver : when the soul speaks then, it speaks in perfect eloquence. Do not attempt to pray until you feel the need, or you will be mocked by your very supplication, and your religion will be turned into scepticism and your simulating piety will become as sourness in the heart. Do not shut the eyes unless you really wish to see God, or the very darkness will become a burden upon your eyelids, and you will wonder that you should have undertaken a weariness so painful ; but when consciously blind, halt, bruised, shattered, wounded, needy, and you hear that the Son of God passes by, then lift up the voice with great shouting, and vehemence and crying and tears, call for him, and you will know whether prayer is a device of the fancy, or a reality and a necessity of the life.

Perhaps the power of Jesus Christ is now exhausted, and therefore he did not give to the mother of Zebedee’s children what she asked for. Now and again he did say “ No” to men, but rarely. He would rather have said “ Yes” a thousand times. Can he give any more ? Let me read. “ So Jesus had compassion.” I may pause there, for I know the rest. Once let his *compassion* be touched and his omnipotence goes along with it. Had he no compassion on the mother of Zebedee’s children ? None. No

appeal was made to pity or to love. The moment we read that Jesus had *compassion*, we may close the book, for we know the rest, down to its uttermost line and hue. "And he touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight and they followed him." It is well that this incident occurs immediately after the conversation with the mother of Zebedee's children. We wondered if the power had run out, we began to be surprised at this answer, as supposing that mayhap the almighty, as we imagined it, had exhausted itself, and now he was making up by much reasoning what was lacking in sterling strength. It is not so. His "Yes" would not be so grand if he could not say "No." He is so complete to me that I follow him through his whole life, for here he says to a mother with her two children "No," and there he says to two blind men, "What do you want?" "Sight." "Then," said Jesus, "take it and see."

Now herein is the whole controversy about prayer settled, to my own satisfaction. I pray God to let me sit sometimes on the right hand and sometimes on the left of the majesty of heaven, and he says "No." Then I pray him to pity me and take me up and heal my sicknesses and supply that which is lacking, and I approach him in the right spirit, humbly, self-renouncingly, hopefully, unable to see him because of the great hot tears that blind me, and yet sometimes seeing him the better for those waters of contrition. Then he says, "What wilt thou? Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. What wilt thou? and thou shalt have it even to the half of my kingdom—what wilt thou?" Then seizing the occasion I tell him what my real necessity is, and he who said "No" to my *ambition*, gives me to overflow when I plead my *necessity* and urge the plea of a burning pain. Ten thousand little prayers fall down upon the altar, from which they went feebly up, because they were inspired by ambition or vitiated and tainted by some selfish purpose, whereas other prayers that went up for pardon and pity, help, light, succour—when I asked him to sit up all night because of the affliction that is in the house, to open mine eyes because I could not see one step before me, and to lead on where the way was all bog—then he gave me great Amens which pronounced and answered the prayer of my aching heart.

## LXXVII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, who can follow the way which thou dost take, or understand the writing of thy books, or hear all the music of thy voice ? We are always left behind : we cannot keep pace with thy going ; we are tired, and if thou didst not gather the lambs in thy bosom and carry them in thine arms, behold thy whole flock would be left in stony places. But thou art mindful of us with tender care : when we are weak then are we strong, because thou dost draw us still nearer to thine own almighty ness. We have heard of thee from Jesus Christ, and he calls thee our Father : he hath revealed the Father, he told us that he himself came from the bosom of the Father—his speech about thee has made us glad with true joy.

Thou hast numbered the very hairs of our head, thou hast given unto us all thy heart's love, yea thou didst so love us as to give thine only-be gotten Son to live, to die, to rise again, to pray all his breath in Heaven. He is our Priest and Intercessor and great King, as he was our Saviour when he died upon the cross and poured out his precious blood for the ransom and redemption of the world. Why do we not believe thee ? Behold some of us now in thine house are dumb and deaf and blind, and our hearts are as the nether millstone. Some of us have never wept at the cross, some of us have never felt the cleansing blood. Why are some altars left unlighted, why are some lives left among the beasts that perish ? We cannot understand this : it is too high for us and too deep and altogether out of our scope and reach. We mourn it.

Thou art kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Thou dost not pour thy rain upon the gardens of righteous men alone, nor dost thou confine the shining of the sun to the windows of those that are open towards the heavens in loving expectation and desire, but thou pourest thy rain upon good and bad, just and unjust, and the shining of the sun is an impartial glory. So surely is thy love in Christ : did he not die for the whole world, is he not sent into every country, has he not a gospel for every heart, did he not cry over the cities that rejected him, is not his heart filled with compassion towards all the children of men ? Why this hardness, why this unanswering rebellion of spirit ? May we pray that now the mighty change may be accomplished—may we desire in loving prayer that now may be the day of salvation to all who have not yet uttered the oath of love or received the seal of pardon ? Come suddenly to thy people : now that we are all in one place may we be of one accord

—when we are of one accord thou wilt not withhold the pentecostal benediction and revelation.

Spirit of the living God, come now—Spirit of fire, answer us from the high Heavens—Spirit of life, let thine answer be unto us great and tender and full of satisfaction. Dry the tears of our sorrow, staunch our bleeding wounds, lift up those that are cast down, speak comfortably unto Jerusalem, let tender solaces recover our strength and messages from Heaven rekindle the lamp of our hope. O save us, Mighty One—draw us to thyself, and set not the foot of thy power upon any one of us, or we shall be crushed and destroyed, but open thine heart and bid us welcome to thy love, and show us the meaning of the cross of Christ, and at the close of this, our waiting upon thee together, with one consent, may we have seen the King in his beauty and heard voices from Heaven. Amen.

### **Matthew xxi. 1-16.**

1. And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage (on the road from Jericho, and to the east of Bethany) unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2. Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her ; loose them, and bring them unto me.

3. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them ; and straightway he will send them.

4. All this was done (has come to pass) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5. Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

6. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

7. And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

8. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way ; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David : blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest.

10. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved (filled with pilgrims at the beginning of Passover week), saying, Who is this ?

11. And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

12. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers (Syrian, Egyptian, Greek, the money might be), and the seats of them that sold doves.

13. And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the

house of prayer ; but ye have made it a den of thieves (Palestine was then swarming with brigands).

14. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple ; and he healed them.

15. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David, they were sore displeased,

16. And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say ? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea ; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ?

### THE ENTRY INTO THE CITY.

**H**OW did he know where the ass was, and the colt, and in what condition they would be found ? This seems to be a little thing in the reading, but if you will think yourselves back into the exact details of the situation, even in this little bush you may find a fire that burns, but does not consume. How did Jesus know all the little things of which he spake in the course of his ministry upon earth ? How did he see Nathanael under the fig-tree, how did he read and picture his character and state it in words that startled the man himself ? How did he know who it was in the tree looking down upon him in a spirit of curiosity ? How knew he the man's name and the man's circumstances, and how did he dare say that he would be the man's guest that day ? And by what power of vision does he see the place where the ass is, and the colt, the place where two ways meet, and the possibility of the owners being there ? How does he charge the disciples to explain their errand to any one who should interrogate them upon it ? We take these things too much as a matter of course, but diligently consider them, and weigh them, and bring them up to their proper and complete totality, and tell me if the upgathering of these fragments does not fill many baskets, and does not awaken all the wonder, of a religious kind, of which man is capable.

Yet, with all this, he uses a word which seems to set it in singular and all but painful contrast. He speaks as a man of *need* ; he who could see all things and foretell all things confesses to his personal necessity. The head that carried all knowledge had not where to sleep, of its own right and title. And again in that very selfsame sentence he used a word which throws the term "need" into striking contrast—Lord. Such strange mixture do we find in

the talk of this Man. *Lord* and *need* in the same sentence ! He does not give up his royalty because of his necessity, nor does his royalty and Lordship save him from need. And yet what need could *he* have who had but to express the wish and it was instantly complied with ? It was a sweet necessity, it was the pain of that hunger which had wherewith to satisfy itself. Is not hunger a delightful sensation when the smoking feast is before you ? What hunger is that which betakes itself into a banqueting hall loaded with all that can delight the senses and satisfy the appetite ? What need could he have who had but to *wish* and it was done, to *command* and it stood fast, to express a desire and it hastened on eager feet and with passionate love to satisfy it even to overflow ?

A wondrous reality you will find in all the life and speech of Jesus. He hides nothing. He is Lord and yet he has need ; he is Master, and yet he hath not where to lay his head : he commands with all the breadth and emphasis of one who would rule worlds, and yet the foxes are better housed and the birds have nests to themselves, while he is exile and wanderer, solitary as a homeless one. Nothing is painted here, nothing veneered, nothing kept back : the stern, simple, absolute reality faces the reader and compels him, if he be a man of candid mind, to acknowledge that nothing is set down here by way of false allurement, but everything is real, strong, simple, and open, to be tested by all the organs and instruments of reason.

He is now about to fulfil a scripture. “ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.” He did nothing extemporaneously, his most sudden act was a flash from a volcano which it had taken an eternity to gather. There was all the appearance of freshness about everything he did, as if it had never been thought about before, and yet just as he planned this journey did he plan the whole scheme of things of which we form a more or less insignificant part. He foresaw the occasion, knew where to find the colt on which he would ride, sent for it, gave an answer by anticipation to any man who asked the disciples what they were doing. See in the little event before you, with all its exquisite shaping and adaptation, on a small scale what he has been doing on the scale of the universe. The very hairs of your head are all numbered, the inventory of the universe is in heaven, the Writer of the books that cannot be burned is in the skies, all

things are set down there in imperishable ink, and when the Son of Man is come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then will he read all over the earth's long story, so bloody, tragic, terrible, and yet, in his reading, they will fall into strange weird resonance and rhythm, and we shall find that even the storms have been caught up within the embrace of a law inspired of God, and tending to the blessedness and perfecting of the human race.

Are there not many of us who would send Jesus Christ the *colt* from the stable, the horse from the field, the cattle from the pasture, the gold from the bank, and yet would not send him—*ourselves*? We might be proud to give him anything we *have*—he wants *us*, as we are. He seeks not yours, but you, and having you, he has yours. Therein is a solemn truth, deep as life. It is not enough to give him out of the hand, we must give him the hand *itself*. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are Christ's. We are not to *subscribe*, we are to *sacrifice*: We are not to send something, we are to take *ourselves*. We beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

“ And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way : others cut down branches from the trees and strawed them in the way, and the multitudes that went before and that followed cried.” They might do all that, and do nothing ! The men sent the colt : the great multitude spread their garments, others cut down branches, and all cried with a loud voice, as if the King had come, and must be hailed in shouts of loyal delight. All that might mean nothing, and yet, if it meant the right thing, it was itself necessary. What is there under it ? If the life be under it, then the enthusiasm is not only contagious, it is necessary, and it is most beautiful. Christ awakens enthusiasm : the loyalty which is paid to Christ is a loyalty of passionate and uncontrollable love, it keeps back nothing, it considers that nothing has been done while anything remains to be attempted. Such love holds that nothing has been given whilst anything has been withheld.

Where is *passion* to-day ? Who now is excited in a godly and healthy sense about Jesus Christ ? Yet he is the Man of the day,

books written about him are still read and asked for, and are greatly multiplied. Still he is the puzzle of the times : he overlooks every shoulder, breathes upon every honest labourer, speaks comfortably to every suffering heart, divides the burden and multiplies the joy of every life. Are we not too cold about him ? Are we not too respectable, in the merely conventional sense of that term, in the arrangement and expression of our piety ? Are we not as successors, the unnamed but real posterity of the Scribes and the Pharisees who were appalled by the enthusiasm which Jesus Christ evoked ? Consider this well. I do not want any of you to spread your garments in the way and cut down branches from the trees, and to join the great cry, unless these things express a real and healthy condition of the *heart*. Yet it must not be left unsaid, that where there is absolute, unreserved consecration of the soul, there will be corresponding expression in the whole demeanor of the life.

“ And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved,”—but Luke puts in an incident which Matthew omits : going towards the city, unable to see it because of a shoulder of the hill, he turns suddenly round, and there was beauteous queenly Jerusalem, great light shining upon it and covering it as with a robe of purest snow. And yonder were the marble pinnacles, and yonder the gilded roof of the temple—such a sight in form of a city never flashed on human eyes. Yet the Evangelist says, “ And when he came near the city he wept over it.” He never wept for himself : when he told the disciples that he was going up to Jerusalem to be betrayed into the hands of men who should mock him and scourge him and crucify him, no tear stood in his eye—but when he was come near the city, he wept over it, and said, “ Hadst thou known, even thou, in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace ! But now they are hidden from thee.” When he stood in the judgment hall, when he was smitten with the reed, when men spat upon his face, when they plucked the hair from his cheek, he wept not—but when he was come near the city, he wept over it, and said, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, but thou wouldest not ! It is now too late.”

He weeps over you, hard hearts ; he weeps over you, disobedient

ent and self-pleasing will and purpose of life. No scourge could make him cry for himself, no nails driven into his hands ever caused him to weep weakly for the pain's sake ; but when he was come nigh unto the city he wept over it. Those tears were the prelusive drops of a thunder shower that destroyed the queen of cities : they went before the great black thunder drops that fell on the hot streets—and as he cries over us to-night his tears have the same meaning—he will rain fire and brimstone from heaven upon those that continue their sin beyond the reach of his patience. It is one of two things, it is falling upon that stone and being broken, or having the stone falling upon us and being ground to powder.

" And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ? " Cities are moved by various causes. Let news of a great *war* be reported in London, and, great as the city is, it will be moved from centre to circumference. Let a great *man* die, even in a green old age, and the city, the country, the civilised world feels that the cedar has fallen. It is a great thing indeed to have such responsibility attached to power and to life, that when the man dies the world shall feel itself poorer because of his withdrawal. The death that eclipses the gaiety of nations, that stops the mad dance half through, that makes the winebibber set down his goblet half drained, that interferes with the business of the day,—marvellous indeed is such a fact. We cannot hope to attain that influence, but we can obtain a better. You may so live as to be missed by your family for your good deeds, you may so live that the house will be empty without you, and those who loved you will have no more joy under that roof because you have gone away.

The whole city was moved. Here was a Man who could move a city and could satisfy every emotion he excited. Some men cannot control the excitement which they raise—others raise it only to mock it by grievous disappointment. Here is a Man who moves the city to the uttermost depths of its feeling and expectation, and having stirred the city life into one vehement prayer, has the Amen upon his lips which can satisfy its every petition. Would that whole cities would cry unto him ! That will never be done until individuals as such approach him in the right spirit.

Do not therefore let us yearn for the movement of whole cities, but begin where we can, by every individual heart calling him "Lord," and crying unto him as Saviour and King. Speak you the holy word just now ; poor broken bleeding heart—call him Saviour : strong man without a tremor of weakness, a pang of pain, or an emotion of fear or distress, go over to his side and bless him for your strength, and offer it as a sacrifice upon his altar. And you, little children, may also join this act of loyal worship.

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple,"—those children were boys : it is a masculine noun—but, little girls, *you* may join the hymn. Boys and girls of every condition in life, rich and poor, well instructed and ignorant, you may bring your tribute of praise. You may be rebuked : the priests and scribes when they heard the boys crying in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David," were sore displeased. The boys were choristers in the temple : they were paid to sing, and they did not receive their money for the purpose of crying "Hosanna" to a foreigner, especially this Jesus of Nazareth and Galilee, and they thought that Christ himself ought to interfere and rebuke such enthusiasm. They said unto him, "Hearest thou what these say?" as if he did not hear everything. We are told that the great musician hears every instrument in the whole band. We have heard of one great conductor throwing up his baton because one instrument was not doing its duty in the great musical fray. He stopped, saying "Flageolet." The burst of music in all its swing, and fulness, and grandeur, and expressiveness, was not pleasing him because one small flageolet was missing its duty. As if Jesus did not hear who was singing in the congregation and who is not singing, as well, and it pains him to see some who ought to be singing who are not uniting their voices in the common praise. Yet singing is not a question of the voice only ; do not say a man is not worshipping God in the song because he is not singing : one sings sympathetically as well as vocally. You sing with the spirit and with the understanding as well as with the voice. It is an error of a very mischievous kind to suppose that a man is not singing or praising God simply because he is not doing so vocally.

I sing best with the greatest singer : when I hear one who can sing I sing with the singer. It carries my soul aloft : every heart-throb of mine heightens the great song.

Jesus Christ answered these men from their own standpoint. Observe, they were persons whose business it was to read the law and understand it, and again and again in his life Jesus Christ turned round upon these men and said, “Have ye never read?” They were spending a lifetime in reading the letter, and they seldom touched the vital spirit. These children were not singing extemporaneously ; it was not a piece of haphazard work in the temple ; this utterance of the boys was a fulfilment of prophecy. “Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise”? He had read everything. How did he come—he was not a man of letters—to have read everything? Because he had *written* everything. He was not the reader only, but the writer : he inspired Moses. “If ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.” And beginning at Moses and all the prophets and the psalms, he expounded unto his disciples, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

Jesus Christ always said a kind word about the children. The disciples rebuked them, and he protected the dear little creatures. The priests and the scribes were sore distressed because of the children’s voices, and Jesus said, “They are fulfilling prophecy.” When did he turn any one away who would offer praise to his name or express gratitude for his goodness? What I want to do myself is not to send him my colt or gold or flowers or branches or clothes, and not to join only in some loud loyal cry of delight, but to offer him my poor, wounded, guilty SELF. If he will accept me, cleanse me, make me without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, purify me by the washing and cleansing of his own blood, then the house is his, and the garden, and the business, and the bank. Having secured the heart, he has secured all.

## LXXVIII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, if we put our trust in thee, our souls shall know no unrest or pain, for thou wilt bring forth our righteousness as the light and our judgment as the noonday. Thou dost carry all government, and none can rule but by thy permission—behold, every sovereignty is part of thine own : thou art the reigning One and there is none higher than the Father. Help us to put our whole trust in this sacred doctrine, that our souls may not be driven about and tossed with every wind that blows, but may enjoy a sense of security, and enter into the mystery of the peace of God. Thou dost hide us in thy pavilion, thou dost surround us with inviolable security, thine eye is upon us for good, thine hand is laid upon us that we may be defended. Help us to read the miracles of thy providence, to understand them as signs given to the sons of men from Heaven, and may we so read thy wonderful works as to enlarge in happy continuation the word which thou hast written in thy Book for our daily instruction.

Thy law is one through all the ages : it is broken only to our senses by sleep and wakefulness, by surprises which reveal our ignorance, but from thy throne, ever continued, ever consistent, full of love, shining with beneficence, the purpose of God, the election and decree of Heaven. That we may rest on the rocks is our prayer, that our feet may stand upon the eternal granite of thy righteousness is our heart's desire—then we shall have peace and sweet content and bright hope, and our heart shall be as the church of the angels.

We have come to sing our united hymn in thy hearing, to make common prayer at the foot of thy throne, to lift up the voice of our thanksgiving without restraint, and to plead with thee that as our day, so our strength may be, and that according to the burden we have to carry may be thy sustaining grace. We come by the appointed way : Jesus said, “ I am the door”—we enter by that living door, we come by the cross of Christ, upon us and upon every syllable of our prayer is the sacred blood of the atoning sacrifice ; so shall we prevail with thee, and our hymn and our prayer shall have audience in Heaven.

Pity us, for we are here but a little while, and whilst we are here we are digging our grave. Shed thy tears upon us, but withhold the glances of thy judgment, for we are as a vapour that cometh for a little time and then vanisheth away ; yet hast thou given unto us wondrous capacities—of sin, of knowledge, of service, of homage to thy throne, and of com-

plete identification with every purpose that stirred the heart of the Redeemer of the world. May those capacities be sanctified, may fire from Heaven take away from them everything that is impure, and may the Holy Ghost, the fire of the universe, the flame of light and of glory, dwell within us, subduing our will, enlightening our mind, leading our purified heart into higher rapture and more loving service.

Thou knowest all the purposes of our life ; the plans we have laid out for to-morrow thou hast read in every line and shape ; all the secret things in our heart are written with sunbeams on the walls of Heaven—thou knowest us altogether, our purposed journeyings and voyagings, our breakings up of immediate relations that they may be renewed in still tenderer embraces, our commercial enterprises, our family designs, every trouble that depresses, every light that brings us joy—all is known unto thee : thou art ruling and directing all. We pray for the spirit of resignation and trust and complete love, that we may rest in the Lord and commit our way unto the Father.

Take away from us the delight of our eyes, the pride of our life, the joy of our home, and the staff of our pilgrimage if thou wilt, but take not thy Holy Spirit from us. We yield ourselves into thine hand : they are well kept whom thou dost keep. Make our bed in our affliction : when the enemy is strongest, be thou mightier than he, and when he would come in as a flood, lift up thy Spirit as a standard against him.

Send messages from thy table to all the guests who would have been here but cannot, because of suffering, in mind, body, or estate. Speak comfortably to such in their solitude, turn their tears into blessings, and may their weakness become the point of their strength. Comfort all that mourn, visit those whom others avoid, let the helplessness of the weak be the reason of thy coming to them in the almightyess of thy grace. Watch all the seas of the globe, search all the lands where our loved ones are, find out where they be that messages of love may reach them—and as for those for whom we dare hardly pray, so much in hell, do thou search for them, and seek them, and bring them back—thou, the loving Shepherd, the wounded Man, the sacrificed Priest, the Son of God. Amen.

### **Matthew xxi. 17-22.**

17. And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany ; and he lodged there.

18. Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

20. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away !

21. Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, yet shall not only do this which is done to

the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea ; it shall be done.

22. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

### THE CONDEMNATION OF USELESSNESS.

FROM the *city* to the *village*—it seems to be but a short journey ; in point of mileage indeed it was nothing but an easy walk. From the city into *Bethany*—how far was *that* ? Do not tell me the distance in miles, statute or geographical—such journeys have not to be measured by arithmetical instruments. From the city to Bethany was from a battle-field to a home—how far is *that* ? From the city to Bethany was a journey from strangeness to friendship—who can lay a line upon that immeasurable distance ? From the city to Bethany, a journey from tumult and riot and murder to love and rest and tender ministry—who can lay a line upon that diameter and announce its length in miles ? None.

It was worth while making that little change for one night—one quiet look upward, one brief solemn pause in the rush of life, that the head might turn towards the stars and the firmament and the serenities of the upper places. The *house* at Bethany was not grand, but the *home* was lined with the gold of love. We want such a home when the stress is heavy upon us—tears could be shed there without being misunderstood, and the heart could tell its whole tale or remain in total silence, just as the mood determined, and there would be no misconstruction. It was a church in the rocks, it was a sweet sanctuary, just out of the great high road of life's business and sacrifice. Can you retire to such a nest ? Happy is your lot ! He who can find a Bethany, a home, a rest-place, a Sabbath in the midst of the week, can bear his burdens with equanimity, and grace and hope.

But we must *return*. In the seventeenth verse we read, “ And he left them and went out of the city,” and in the eighteenth verse we read, “ As he returned into the city.” The village must not detain us long—the village for rest, the city for toil. Once the disciples said unto him by the mouth of their spokesman,

“ Lord, it is good to be here : let us build.” He himself could have said that morning in Bethany, “ It is good to be here : warm is this home, the walls are like arms round about me. Why not tarry here and rest till the storm blow away, and all God’s great sky shine again in translucent blue above my head ?” But he *returned*.

And as he returned, he *hungered*. See the wonderful naturalness of this story : it lives in the very words which tell it. Truly this Jesus was human : he never was at pains to conceal his humanity, he drew no screen around his weakness, saying, “ My followers must not see me in this low condition.” At Sychar he told a woman that he thirsted ; on the road from Bethany he hungered ; on the sea he fell asleep. About the humanity of Christ there can be no doubt : his deity is the greater to me because of his humanity. The foot of this ladder is upon the earth : I can begin at certain points in this history and find my way upward to other and remoter points.

The circumstance of the fig-tree must be treated in this particular connection as illustrative of the inner life of Christ. His treatment of that tree was a revelation of himself as he was at that moment. Jesus Christ never did other than reproduce his real self at the time : whatever he did is the counterpart and outer sign of his own mental and spiritual condition at the time of revelation. In the action find the spirit. Read the life of Christ in the light of this suggestion, and it will be its own commentary and broadest and clearest exposition. Every *act* was a translation of the *Man*. See how true this is in the case before us. Christ always looked for the fulfilment of the Divine idea in everything. The divine idea of the fig-tree was not leaves, but fruit. There was no fruit, and therefore the word of destruction was spoken. Consider how near he was to the fulfilment of the divine idea which he himself represented, and a man so burningly in earnest could brook no disappointment then. His own life was too hot to stand the mockery of any disappointment. He came to the fig-tree searching for fruit ; he found nothing but leaves, and he spoke the word that withered it away.

What have we here but a great law, namely, that the earnestness

of the living *man* determines his view of *everything* round about him? Jesus Christ was always earnest, but even his earnestness acquired a new accent and intensity as the baptism of blood came nearer. “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” That was the mood of the Man : he could not brook any irony of a practical kind then. We know what this is in our own life, when high pressure is put upon us, when all life is centred in one effort, when all the energies of our nature are wakened up and are bearing upon one object which we consider worthy of them—how impatient we then are with mockery and disappointment and trifling of every kind ! We who under other circumstances could pause and wait and wonder and excuse and suggest mitigations of the case, can brook no delay or mockery when the blood is at its supreme heat.

Jesus Christ showed this in his cleansing of the temple for the second time. We wondered how the men consented to have themselves driven out of the place. You should have seen the driver, *that* would have explained all : you should have seen the royalty of his look and heard the sovereignty of his tone, and felt the fervour of his prayer. There are times when vice owns the supremacy of virtue : Jesus Christ now realised one of those times when he heard in the temple the voices of the brigands who haunted the limestone caverns of Judea : the calling of their merchandise and the clamour of their selfishness roused his indignation, and he scourged the ruffians out of the house they had polluted.

This was the temper of his mind just then, when he wanted the ass, and the colt, the foal of the ass—“ Say the Lord hath need of him, and he will be given up.” In that temper he came into the temple and cleansed it, in that temper he looked upon the disappointing fig-tree and withered it. All this is but a transcript of himself. Everything, in the judgment of Christ must be real, useful, and satisfying according to its nature. His very *hunger* was a judgment at that time. He did not wither away the poor Samaritan woman who parleyed with him about a draught of water : he had more time on his hands—the cross was farther off, it was a time of revelation rather than of judgment, and he spoke kindly true words to her and held a mirror up to her in which she saw herself in all the length and mystery of her lifetime. He who

so communed with the woman at the well withered up the tree that did not supply him with food at the moment of his necessity. It was the same Christ, but the same Christ under different circumstances. At Sychar he was Revealer, Interpreter of the universe, Messiah, the Revealed One of God—on the road from Bethany, wanting almost his last breakfast upon earth before the great tragedy, he was burning, heated sevenfold, the stress was terrible —every *look* was then a *judgment*!

Jesus Christ here shows what he will do with all *useless* things. This is not a *surprise* in the revelation of Christ. Do not let us lift up our eyes from the page and say how *wonderful* that he should have done this. In very deed, if we have rightly read the story, this is the very thing he has been doing as he has been coming along the whole line of his life, only we see some things now and then more sharply than at other times. There are occasions upon which whole revelations are condensed in an incident, and we give way to a pitiful wonder which does but betray our ignorance of what has already passed before us. This circumstance was foretold in the great sermon on the mount, when Jesus said, “If the salt have lost its savour it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.” In that sentence you have the withered fig-tree as to all its law, and inner meaning, and certain judgment, and, when Christ antedated the day of final criticism, and brought before him the man who had buried his talent in a napkin and brought it out and shook it down, saying, “There thou hast that is thine,” he said, “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.” That was but the divine and highest view of this very fig-tree scene—the condemnation of uselessness, the outcasting and final burning of unprofitableness. Do not let us therefore consider that we have come upon an *exceptional* instance, as though nothing of this kind had been so much as hinted at before. Here we find the accentuation, in a most visible and palpable instance of a law which has guided the Saviour in *all* his previous ministry.

Will this be the law of his procedure *always*? Most certainly it will. If so, what will happen in society, in politics, in the church? This will occur: he will come up to our institutions seeking fruit, and if he find none, he will wither the institutions

away. See there the difference between him and us. We keep up institutions because they are a hundred years *old*—Jesus Christ keeps them up because they *bear fruit*. We preserve our institutions and our organisations and machinery, because of their *venerableness*; we think it a pity to touch them. True, they are not so useful as they were *want* to be : true, they are effete, they are self-exhausted, but seeing that they have been standing there a thousand years, let them stand a thousand longer ! So talks an unreal sentimentalism. Jesus Christ says, “If they do not satisfy the hunger of the age, let them be withered and cut down and removed, and new ones put in their places.” He judges of your institutions by their power of satisfying the *hunger* that immediately applies to them. So shall it fare with the church, with the pulpit, with all that we hold traditionally dear. Jesus Christ will attend our services, and he will draw nigh unto the pulpit and say, “I hunger, give me food,” and the pulpit that does not satisfy the healthy and natural hunger of the soul, he will wither away. No matter how old, how costly, how traditionally grand, how adorned with faded splendours of the past, if it do not contain food and water for the immediate hunger of the age, he curses it and it must wither away. How *real* he is, how stern in his *healthiness*, how utterly and grandly robust in all his demands. He will cut down, he will wither away, he will destroy, he will overturn, overturn, overturn, until the right kingdom come in and be set up on foundations that cannot be moved.

How *steifly* the decree executed itself. “And presently the fig-tree withered away.” When was his miracle ever done other than *presently*? How suggestive is this reflection. Early in the sacred book we read, “And God said, Let there *be*—” there *was*! The *be* hardly died out of the startled air till the thing spoken of stood fast. So here and everywhere throughout the whole story of the miracles, we have immediateness, instancy, obedience without reluctance, reply without hesitation. A man is withered away in a moment ; a great man disobedient, disloyal, untrue to God, unfaithful to oath and covenant, is touched by the invisible finger—is *gone*! He calls it loss of memory, he speaks of it as premature old age, he rubs his eyes as if to make them new and young again, and says there is a mist before them. What is he?

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A tree without fruit, a cumberer of the ground, man without manhood, a living irony, a mocker of realities, a hypocrite, a palpable and mischievous sarcasm !

And so at the end we have just the selfsame thing as at the beginning and at the middle. So subtle and complete is the consistency of the divine government. “ Let there be—” and there was. “ Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever”—and presently the fig-tree withered away. And at the last he will say to some “ Depart,” and these shall *go away!* My soul, come not thou into that secret.

It is in the power of almighty to wither us, to turn our brain upside down, to confuse the memory, to cause reason to lose her way in the troubled brain and to be groping there in everlasting night. He interrupts the currents of vitality, he isolates the mocking life, he will not have uselessness in his church—his is a withering word, nor does he spare it even on his way to save the world. He could have withered his betrayers and judges by one glance, he could have burned up the mob which was led by the gentility and culture of the age, and left them as white ashes on the ground they had dishonoured ; but the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them, and whilst there is one drop of sap in the bruised reed he will not break it, whilst there is one spark in the smoking flax he will not quench it. But he says, as he only can say, “ My Spirit shall not always strive. O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. Now they are hidden from thee.”

When the disciples saw it, they once more fell down from the dignity of the occasion, and showed, as we have so often seen, littleness and meanness of soul. Would we could put them all out of the way when we read this story : we should then feel as if walking on mountain tops—but ever and anon we are plunged right down into deep valleys by those mocking foolish men. They marvelled, saying, “ How soon is the fig-tree withered away,” struck by the *incident*, not impressed by the *law*—marvelling at something that was comparatively of no consequence, and forgetting the grand and universal doctrine that was conveyed. They are like ourselves. Instead of hearing the *sermon*, we hear how it

was *delivered* : instead of listening for the eternal tone, and the *eternal truth*, we look at some mean *transient incident* of the occasion. What wonder if we are lean in soul, poor and empty in mind, and tossed about because of unfaith and every mischievous doubt ? We should be on the outlook for the *everlasting*, our eyes should be shut so that they might not be tempted or led away by little or unmeaning incidents, and that our heart might have intensity of concentration in reference to the great things spoken by Christ.

See how these men have not grown one solitary whit from the beginning until now, and in a page or two they will *run away* : they *must* run away—such wonderers, such puerilities, could not *stay* : they must run, they will forsake him and flee, and thus complete the poetic circle and bring to its proper issue the ideal consistency of such characters. They who had seen a thousand miracles, the dead raised, the blind restored, the deaf made to hear, the sea quieted by a command, wondered with puerile amazement because the fig-tree shrunk in a moment and was withered up for ever. Such hearers would have degraded any preacher but the Son of God, such hearers would have stripped even him of every feature of heroism and dragged him down to their own mean dust, if he had been other than God himself. Any man-lighted candle they would have blown out—because the light was solar and fed from eternity they could not extinguish its splendour.

Now Jesus returns and lifts up the occasion again to the right level. Said he, “ If ye have faith and doubt not.” Not only so, he made the occasion an opportunity of laying down the great law of prayer : so does he turn our wonder to great uses and make our ignorance the starting-point of his own revelation. “ And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” *Believing*, not hoping for, not selfishly expecting, not transiently wishing, but *believing* : and a man cannot believe in the right sense who is asking for anything which his reason condemns as improper, unjust, or mischievous. This word “ believing” guards this promise like a flaming sword. I cannot ask for riches or strength or honour or fame : I cannot ask that one may sit on the right hand and another on the left : I cannot ask that the laws

of nature be suspended and the universe be afflicted with a thousand troubles, whilst I am in the mood described as “ believing.” How much is involved in that word : resignation, childlike trust, asking for what God will give, and rounding off every prayer with this sweet Amen, “ Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done.”

Thus Jesus Christ would make us believe that we answer our own prayers just as he told the people that they had wrought their own miracles. So great grace was never seen before. He told the poor woman who went straightened and invigorated from his feet, that she had made herself whole—“ Daughter,” said he, “ go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole. Not my almighty ness but thy faith.” So he told all the people upon whom the miracles were wrought, “ According to your faith be it unto you.” “ Canst thou believe ? All things are possible to him that believeth.” And now in prayer, when I fall down before God, and with united heart and clenched hands, the whole man symbolical of homage, resignation, faith, and ask for what I need, when God hands it to me from his hospitable heavens, he says, “ Take it : thy Faith hath prevailed.”

## LXXIX.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou dost see all things at once : there is nothing hidden from thine eyes : our hearts give up their secrets to thee as thou dost look upon us. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Thou art not searching for our faults, thou art looking for the return of our hearts to their harmony with thyself. Thy look has no fire of destruction in it, but is filled with the tears of tenderness, and often brightened by the expectation of loving hope. We have come to thine house to-day—it is a step in the upward road, may we take the next, and all the rest following, and by steadfast perseverance be brought at last into the great eternal life.

We have come with hymns in our hearts and upon our lips because of thy care and love, thy pity and protection, and because our lives have been lived in thy goodness and have been held up by both thine hands, so that until this hour we have not fallen into the great darkness. We come to thee as the God of the Jew and of the Gentile, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and the Father of them that know thee not, and the Redeemer of the ends of the earth. We know thee by Jesus Christ thy Son : he spoke to us concerning thee, he called thee Father, he spake of thy love, he told us that he himself came to express it in daily humiliation, in the revelation of eternal truth, in living, in dying, in sacrifice, in resurrection, and in priesthood, so that we come to thee by the living way and the only path, and we find access to thy throne of grace because of thy Son who died and rose again for us.

Thou hast led us by a way that we knew not, and by paths we had not known or understood. Thou hast found for us bread in the wilderness and water in desert places. From our youth upward thou hast been our security, a Light that none could extinguish and a Defence that none could violate. We live and move and have our being in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless thee that through innumerable faults and sins, through manifold infirmities and transgressions, thou dost still lead the struggling soul onward towards complete sonship and final deliverance from the power of sin. Thou art mindful of us in the darkness as well as in the light. When the devil falls upon us with all his power, thou dost not permit him to deal upon us the fatal stroke. We are living to praise thee : our days are a continuance of thy favour, and before our eyes thou hast held forth the enchantment of a heavenly prospect. Wherein thou hast left us for a moment, gather us with everlasting kindness. Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel ;

come back again, thou whose absence is an infinite loss, and fill with light the space thou hast thyself created.

We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. We love his name, we are bound to his cross, his life is our hope, his death our sacrifice. He is to us the First and the Last, who was and is and is to come, Head over all, pre-eminent in Heaven, reigning over the universe as over a very little thing. Fill us with the fulness of his grace, inspire us with a sacred ambition to penetrate still more deeply into the tender mysteries of his truth, and may the sweet gospel of his cross be our consolation in every hour of life, and our hope and our triumph in the hour and article of death.

We give ourselves to thee again, and we pray for one another in all tender words, that according to each man's pain and need, some gift may be given from above. Send none away unblest, put in every man's heart a new hope, inspire every soul with unusual gladness, may thy Holy Spirit be the light of our understanding, the fire of our love and the inspiration of our will and purpose. Sanctify all affliction, infirmity, pain, trouble, and all the manifold discipline of this weary life. May we be the stronger for our weakness, may the hours we spend in darkness give us greater appreciation of thy light. Be with our friends who are with us from a distance. Be with the stranger within our gates, may he find that this is none other than his Father's house. Take away from him all sense of solitude, loneliness, and want of friendship, and seizing the idea of the universality of thy church, may he, by the power of sympathy and the divination of love, find in this house the fellowship of the saints.

Be with those who have gone away from us for a time, who are on the great sea, who are in far away lands, who think of us now and mentally unite their hymns with ours. The Lord's benediction make the sea quiet, and the Lord's smile make foreign lands as beautiful as home. Be with all little children : water thou the tender plants in thy garden, visit every nursery and speak some little word to little hearers, and be all through the house, in its uppermost places and in its lowest tenements, and from the highest to the lowest may there be a spirit of godly content and willing submission to thy purpose, and glad expectation of ultimate deliverance and coronation.

Speak with special graciousness to our sick ones, who can scarcely bear upon their cheek the breath of human love. Thou knowest the way to the sinking heart, thou canst speak to the closing ear ; whilst life endures thy hold upon it is certain, and even when it passes away from our appeal, it stands but the freer and gladder in the inner light. Comfort those that mourn, may they be the richer for their tears, the stronger for their infirmities, and out of the buffeting of the wind, may they bring some solid and lasting strength.

This our prayer we pray in the one name, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom we took and with wicked hands hanged upon a tree, and slew. Amen.

**Matthew xxi. 23-46.**

23. And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority (always conferred by the scribes) dost thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26. But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

27. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell (a virtual abdication of their office). And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

28. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

29. He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented, and went.

30. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward (did not even repent afterward), that ye might believe him.

33. Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40. When the lord thereof of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen ?

41. They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked (miserable) men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures (Ps. cxviii. 22), The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ?

43. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken (Isaiah viii. 14-15) : but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

## THE APPLICATION OF PARABLES.

OBERVE that the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Jesus as he was *teaching*. They interfered with his work, and punctuated that work with a question with which they intended to destroy the effect of the doctrine. It is so that our best work is often interrupted and vilely punctuated by those who wish to hinder its deepest and most holy success. An ancient writer has told us that the wolf does not fly at a painted sheep. The wolf understands his purpose, though it be cruel, much better. So the Scribes and Pharisees and the elders of the people did not fly at a Christ who was *doing nothing*—they laid wait for him, and according to their own estimate of their opportunity did they summon their savage energy to work out its malign purpose. But when otherwise or otherwhere could they have come upon him at all ? He was *always* working, he was always teaching, he did but lift up his head for one moment, and then his face glowed as if he had been looking into a furnace when he said, “ Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? ” so that if evil-minded men had to come upon him at all, with any purpose of interrupting or destroying his work, they must of necessity come

upon him in the intensity of a toil that seemed never to avail itself of relaxation.

How will he answer those men? First he will hear what they have to say to him. What is their question? The same question they have always been asking. They have but one question to ask who come thus to Christ. They may indeed devise for it a thousandfold variety of words, but centrally and substantially there is but one question which the enemy can ask for Christ—“Who art thou, or by what authority dost thou work, or who gave thee this authority, or who is thy Father, or whence dost thou come?” He was the mystery of his time: he is the mystery of all time. He is there, and yet he seems to have no right to be there: his credentials are not written in official ink, or signed by the official hand, and yet there he stands, speaking revelations, working miracles, his smile a heaven, his frown a judgment, and people round about him in great thick files, asking who is he, whence came he, by what authority, *quo warranto*, who is this Man, and why does he speak these great thunder-blasts of judgment, or utter these quiet benedictions of light?

Observe how *narrow* is the question put to Christ. It is a question about *authority*. Men who ask *narrow* questions can never be in earnest upon *great subjects*. I venture thus to condense into one sentence what I might speak to you in words of many volumes. Coming to the Bible, coming to Christ, with any little, narrow, pedantic question, you never can grapple with the magnificent occasion or extract from the Book or the Man the vital secret.

Jesus will answer you according to your *question*. You *yourself* determine the speech of the Son of God; whenever you are prepared to begin he will begin with you. How he can tantalise, how he can test the inquirer, how he can spoil the spoiler, how he can hold up to suppressed ridicule the man who would come to him with taunting questions! If you have received no great broad gleaming answer of love and redemption from the Bible, it is because you have come to it with some *little narrow* question. Ask if the Book will submit itself to some *theory* of inspiration, and it may possibly mock you. Say to the Book, “I have a theory by which I would test thee,” and the Book will be dumb—with silence you cannot break. But come *frankly*, with the

nakedness of absolute *moral destitution*, without excuse or plea or self-defence, and knock with bruised fingers upon the door of your Father's house, and angels will open it, and all the store of the house will be yours, and your very hunger will be turned into the supreme blessing of your life. Ye have not because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss. Had these men of the text set themselves down like so many docile children saying, "O Peasant of Galilee, Man of Nazareth, Mystery of the time, yet gentle, wise, true, beneficent, tell us what is in thine heart," he would have answered them as he answered Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to him in the dark, and Christ showed him all the wealth of the stars, and made the heaven so bright that it was no longer a nocturnal interview, but a conversation held in a light above the brightness of the sun. You would have more revelation if you had treated the Bible properly : you would have ampler entrance into the upper courts if you had gone to God with some bold prayer of penitence and high inspiration of expectant and contrite love.

Let us see how far Jesus Christ is true to the *development* through which we have watched him in all these studies. How will he answer men *now*? His teaching was always determined by the time and circumstances surrounding him. Look how true he is to himself. He is still going to make parables, but the parables represent him in a new light. When we studied the thirteenth chapter of this gospel, we thought we had passed through the picture-gallery of the church, and seen all its most beauteous representations of light and shade and hue and tone. We were charmed with the infinite suggestiveness and fertility of the Man's invention and power of utterance. So when we closed the thirteenth chapter, we were as men who descended from a great gallery of divinely painted pictures, and behold in this very twenty-first chapter we have parables again. But observe how the Speaker of them has *changed*. In these parables you catch the tone of *judgment* : here are *judicial* parables as well as parables illustrative of great historical and moral truth. Never can you catch this Man off his guard ; his word is always true to his *feeling*. Nearer the cross now than ever he was before, his word is accentuated by sharper emphasis, and through all the beauty of his parable there gleams some forelight of the great judgment fire.

In these facts find the proof of the Lord's deity. In such subtle

consistency as this find at least the beginning of an argument which will land you in the conviction that, whilst never man spake like this Man, the unusualness of his *speech* came out of the unusualness of his *nature*. He was the Son of God, the only Revealer of the Father, his companion through all eternity, the *Angel of the Covenant* in one age, the *Wisdom* of another, the *Coming One* of all time—*God the Son*.

Observe how he speaks to these men *judicially*, and how all the while he proceeds along the safe and obvious basis of reason and justice. These two parables, as well as the answer about John, are illustrations of the *rational justice* upon which God's kingdom amongst men is based. “A certain man had two sons ; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vine-yard. He answered and said, I will not : but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir : and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father ? They say unto him, the first.” He put a case before them which was apparently not *religious*. Here we find our right and title oftentimes, to occupy secular or *outside* ground, in illustrating and defending the gospel of Christ. In such parables as these, we find the range of the great Teacher's tether. He is not bound within a few inches : he may take his stand on the uttermost point of the horizon, and finding an admission there he may apply it to the whole course and tenor of human life within the ample circle, until it creates a judgment-seat before which to try the sons of men.

Here is hope for some of us. The *narrow technical mind* can never *repent*. This comes out of the very necessity of the case. Narrowness and technicality never can get into the region of *emotion*. Find a man who is a stickler for a form of words, merely because it is venerable, and you find a man who is incapable of *enthusiasm*, and incapability of enthusiasm is only another form of the solemn truth that some men are incapable of *repentance*. Beware how you become the slaves of merely literal forms and special places and peculiar ceremonies : do not become men of the letter, after this narrow sense of the term. Here you find men who are anxious about mere *authority*—they never can be other than purists and pedants. You may be correct and yet incorrect at the same time.

You may be right and may be wrong in the very same breath. If a man should say that the earth stands still, he is right within given limits, and yet he totally misrepresents the condition of the earth when he puts it before his mind, and before the observation of others as a stationary body. Consider it well : the earth stands still and I can build upon it. So far you are literally correct, and yet it is *not* correct to represent the earth as standing still for one solitary moment. So a man may be a purist and a pedant in the letter, and may know nothing about the infinite beauty and suggestiveness and redeemingness of the inner gospel of Christ.

Do not look at the literal authority, look at the *things that are done*, and if the things are done, acknowledge them, and do not say that you pay more respect to the authority than to the accomplishment of the fact. If a man is converted in his inner thinking, in his moral purpose, in the whole set and tone of his mind, I will not inquire into the authority of the man through whose instrumentality that grand fact was accomplished. He may have the right to say to me in all justice, " Believe me for the work's sake." That was Jesus Christ's own appeal. When a man comes before you with nothing but authority, and no issues follow to attest and complete it, then set light by what he terms his credentials.

Now these men were men of authority, the victims of tradition, the creatures of conventionality, and therefore it was impossible for them ever to change their minds. Take care how you join that company : you will be clever but not great, you will have skill within a limited scope, but to your ability there will be no range, no mystery of distance, no suggestiveness of perspective—you will be simply strategic, clever, skilful, acrobatic, but wanting in the infinite genius that lays hold of God at unexpected places, and finds tabernacles for Him where others had suspected but the wastes of the wilderness.

On the other hand the impulsive man is *always* repenting. He said at first, " I will not." That was impulsive. I knew by the very urgency of his tone that he was a better man than he represented himself to be. If he had uttered that sentence slowly but with deliberate, lingering emphasis, I should have had but little confidence in his change—but no sooner was the proposition made to him that he should go and work in the vineyard, than

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flashingly, with the instance of lightning, he said, “I will not.” I knew by his *tone* that he would go ! There are some men that misrepresent themselves—that cannot be understood as to their furthest and deepest meaning. Have faith in some kinds of *bad* men. Have no faith in some kinds of so-called good men. Understand the character in its inner essence and substance, and then, though there be a thousand infirmities and manifold positive sins, as in the case of Abraham and David and Peter, and all the great princes and leaders of the Church, there will be such an ultimate attestation that the divine seed was in the heart as no true witness can dispute or contravene.

Do I speak to any man who has wildly told God that he would not be good ? I have faith in that man. Let us cheer him : I like him in many aspects of his character : he did not mean the rudeness or the violence or the blasphemy—he will think better of it and come to better terms. Do I speak to some who are always falling down, who begin to pray and forget midway what they intended to say ? Do I speak to any poor bruised, broken heart, that is always bringing itself right into collision with some cruel obstacle or hindrance ? I would speak comfortably to such. I have known such among the very best people in the world. Do not be discouraged or cast down. You ask no little peddling questions about authority, you do not go into the question of official ink and prescriptive signature—you are real, and you want reality, and when you have done your worst, no man condemns you so much as you condemn yourself. I shall find you one day with your eyes melted into great hot tears, standing a little way outside the door, asking if after all you may not come in—and come in you shall, come in you will ! If men were turned out because of errors and sins like yours, heaven itself would be but a wooden place filled with wooden saints. No, in you and through you Christ shall come into his great broad human inheritance. Is the *seed* in you, is the right *purpose* in you, when you sin do you *judge* yourself and send yourself to hell ? When you have got wrong do you sentence your soul to a lake of fire and brimstone where the devils are and the hot chains and the eternal burnings ? If so, Christ shall yet have hold of you—none shall pluck you out of his hand. Out upon those who cry for mere authority and stand upon official conventionalism in the things pertaining to this

inner kingdom ; and a welcome, broad as the firmament, bright as the sun, to every prodigal heart that comes in and says, “ I said I would not go, but I want to come, after all. Open the door and let me in.” He will work well because he means it well.

“ Hear another parable,” said Christ, which was inviting the men into a second thunderstorm. Hear *another* parable—it was asking them to bind themselves again to the whipping-post till he scourged them with thongs of scorpions. He calls it a *parable*—it burns like a *judgment*. He says it is a *picture*, but as they look, the *fire* bursts out of it, and scorches their beholding faces. In every Gospel there is a judgment, as in every offer of mercy there is the possibility of a development of obstinacy that will end in penalty. Hear another parable. If he had said so to us in the thirteenth chapter of the gospel, we should have said, “ Yes, and gladly—ten thousand more, for they are like new stars hung up on the background of night’s gloom,” but now we hesitate. Another parable ? Another *fire*, another *judgment*, another *revelation* of ourselves to ourselves !

Then comes the parable of the householder who planted the vineyard, claimed the fruit, sent his servants for it, last of all despatched his son to bring the fruit of the husbandmen, who acted rudely, violently, and with fatal cruelty. Then said Jesus, “ What shall be done to these men ? ” It was another secular instance, it was another instance of his extra-ecclesiastical or theological reasoning, and these men, who were sharp in the market-place, clever in following the lines of an analogy, and a jagged kind of rude justice towards ill-behaving servants, admitted that if the case were as the Speaker put it, there was nothing for those miserable husbandmen but to be *destroyed*. Jesus said, “ Have ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ”? The rejection was but for the moment, but God’s elections will come up in the outgo and expenditure of the ages. He works by centuries, he breathes æons and epochs of a thousand years apiece, but he surely brings his purpose to its culmination.

He did not himself apply the matter further. When they began to think of it, they said, “ He means us. Kill him. We dare

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not, or the people would kill us." Sometimes in judging a case of human justice, we award the penalty to ourselves, and inflict the judgment upon our own hearts. Let us take care lest we bring upon ourselves the double damnation of admitting the logic in a *secular* case and endeavouring to elude its application in *spiritual* instances.

Still he is judge then ; and yet I could not leave these parables with any hope, if I did not search further into them to see if the dear, sweet-souled, loving-hearted Christ were not in them somewhere—not in the *authority*, not in the son that would go and did not, not in the wicked husbandmen—yet he must be here somewhere, I know he must even yet speak some sweet gospel word. Here it is : " The publicans and the harlots believed him : the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you : the kingdom of God shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." There is the *same* Christ, the Christ that cast out devils, the Christ that gave a new chance in life to the woman taken in adultery, the Christ that expelled from the heart of Mary Magdalene the tenants that diabolised her. This is the Christ of hope—this is the Man that dined with publicans and sinners. Fearful as coming from his lips at that time this utterance to the priests, the chief-priests, the elders of the people, as who should say, " Gentlemen, so-called in your own esteem, you who hold the keys of the church and the writings of the sanctuary, ye shall never go into the secret, sacred place, but shall be driven out, and publicans, sinners, harlots ; bruised, wounded prodigals, naked, shoeless, coatless, penniless—all tears, all sorrow—with such *outcasts* shall God fill his house, and ye proud mockers shall be damned."

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### SELECTED NOTES.

*Verse 27.—"And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was."*

"*They answered.*" Wicked regard not a lie, serving their purpose.

"*Could not tell.*" Gr. *they did not know.*

He compelled them to pronounce their own sentence, as *incompetent to fill Moses' seat.*

If they cannot answer *one* here, can they a thousand ? Job ix. 3.

Caught in a hard alternative ; extricated by an act of desperation.

They were thus convicted by all of gross *hypocrisy*.

Elements of their future vengeance were slowly gathering.

Before the Lord, all the world must keep silence. Hab. ii. 20.

These "great knowers" who have always their "we know" at hand, for once, after their arrogant question, say with shame, in the presence of the people, "*We know not.*"

Many a so-called "honest doubter," against his own *conviction*, resembles them, *i.e.*, they know it well, but "*will not say it.*"

Thousands will say anything, rather than "*we are wrong.*"

Gehazi, Ananias, and Sapphira have more imitators than Peter or Paul.

The unrenewed often feel more than they confess.

Knowing the Gospel true, they want *courage* to confess it.

They know Christianity is right, but are too proud to say it.

They pretend to judge Christ's mission, and cannot tell even that of John.

Those who imprison the truth stifle conviction.

This declaration made them *cease to be a Sanhedrim*.

After this they were to Jesus only as *usurpers*.

The people could have answered without hesitation.

Rulers' refusal showed a want of *courage* and *honesty*.

Jesus and John were not *their kind* of prophets.

## LXXX.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou hast to-day spread a great feast for men : may we all come to it and sit down in the places thou hast set apart for us, and eat and drink abundantly, according to thine invitation. We have spent our strength for naught and our money for that which satisfieth not, and our hunger is fierce within us, and our desire is still crying for satisfaction. Thou hast now called us to thine own table, spread with thine own hands, made rich with all the needful things which thou hast found in the universe : may we sit down and be glad in the Lord, and drink the wine of his grace abundantly, and enjoy the security and the light of his dwelling-place. Thou hast opened the door, which is Jesus Christ the Son of God, God the Son : thou hast given unto us of the rich things of creation, of which he, the Saviour, is the one Head : in him we have all things, through him and by him, and alone through him and by him do we enjoy this table of thine, spread with all that can satisfy our hunger and delight our soul. We said in the far-away land, " How many hired servants of my Father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger : I will arise and go to my Father." Lord, see us at thy door, hear our voices, broken by the sobs of our penitence, and give us welcome into thy sanctuary and into thy banqueting house. We have been out in the cold wind, and in the desolate world, and behold the wilderness is full of graves, and in the rocks there is no resting-place. We have not found bread in stony places, nor water on the hill-tops, so bleak and cold, but now we are at thy door thou wilt give us large and instant admission : thou wilt not withhold any good thing from us whilst we cry for thy pity in the name of Jesus.

We are glad that the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth, that the walls of thine house are a support of the walls of our dwelling-place that we cannot move about without seeing the church of the living God set in divers places. We open the door of righteousness and the gate of salvation, and we enter in and we find in thine house sweetness, repose, light, and inspiration.

We have come to tell thee of our sin and our sorrow, to repent of our iniquities and to ask for thy forgiveness, and to pour out all the tale of our sorrow at the feet of the all-healing Christ. Thou canst read in our heart what we cannot speak with our lips, thou understandest our necessity and there is nothing in all the agony of our pain which thou hast not felt. We have a High Priest that can be touched with the feeling of our

infirmity : he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust, he accounteth our life as a wind that cometh for a little time and then passeth away, or as a vapour which dies as it ascends. He will not remember wrath in the time that he remembers mercy, but in all pitifulness, compassion, tender patience, and long-suffering hopefulness, he will mightily redeem our soul from despair, and bring light instead of darkness.

We remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. We hide our little transient duration in the sanctuary of thine eternity. Behold we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. We are likened unto the grass which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, unto a flower which flourisheth for a little time and then dies away. Behold thou hast not mocked us, but thou hast told us of the littleness of our time upon the earth, thou hast pointed out to us our already opened grave, thou hast called upon us to buy up the opportunity, and eagerly to avail ourselves of the occasion whilst it endures. Thy way is simple, and thy testimony is true and easy to be understood. If we are mocked, we have mocked ourselves, we have not been mocked from on high. What misreckoning there is in our calculation is due to our own ignorance and unskilfulness, for thou hast set down our time of threescore years and ten, and thou hast called upon us to redeem the time and to consider the days how few they are and short. We bless thee that though the shortness of the time is present to us, we see death swallowed up in victory, and the great eternity of heaven opening itself before our desire and our hope, and there we hear the voices of welcome and the call to a feast which never ends. May none of us fall short of thy purpose herein—may none of us by unbelief be disappointed at the last, but may every one of us and all near and dear unto us, sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of light and the house of eternity, to go out no more for ever. To this end may we read thy word diligently, consider it deeply, and carry it out continually, and to this end do thou grant unto us the daily ministry of the Holy Ghost—may he dwell in us, enlighten us, rule and guide us in everything, and undertake the administration of our whole life in its innermost thought and purpose and motive.

We give thee thanks for every hope that lights our life, we bless thee for everything that floats down the air from Heaven upon our silent souls, to charm them into grateful repose. For all the sainted dead we bless thee, for our fathers in the church who have gone to the upper assembly, for our loved ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—may we be followers of their faith, and be ultimate sharers of their joy. Comfort those who now mourn their dead and look round to see faces that can be seen on earth no more. Grant unto such the tender solaces of thy gospels, the sweet and lasting inspiration and comfort of thy grace.

Let thy word be amongst us this morning as a summer light, touching every point of our life, and lighting it all up with a tender and celestial illumination. May there be great joy in the church, the sound of song

and high delight within the sanctuary of the Lord, and when men ask us the reason of this rapture, may we find it in the closeness of our fellowship with the very heart of the Son of God. Deliver every man from bondage, and every soul from mean and unworthy fear. Dispel all dejection and gloom and hopelessness, and in our hearts do thou cause us to hear a new and gladsome song.

Give laughter to the young, high delight and brilliant hopefulness to those who are in the morning of life, and give chastening and mellowness to those who are farther on, so that without moroseness or sourness of disposition or of heart, they may speak with all sobriety of the mysteriousness and grandeur of life. And to the aged and the dying, who have gone upstairs to come down of themselves no more, speak gentle words, breathe benedictions, send messages from Heaven, make the heart young whilst the body dies, and give hope that the soul shall, through Jesus Christ, Saviour and Mediator, enjoy the summer of Heaven, the rest, the peace of the upper places of thy kingdom. Amen.

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### Matthew xxii. 1-14.

1. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.

3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding : and they would not come.

4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner : my oxen and my fatlings are killed (Isa. xxv. 6), and all things are ready : come unto the marriage.

5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise :

6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

7. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth : and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10. So these servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests.

11. And when the king came in to see (not merely to *look* at, but to *inspect*) the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.

12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless (gagged).

13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

## GOD'S WELCOMES AND MAN'S REFUSALS.

NOTICE the change in the tone of the parables. The parables are not all of one class, though they all seem to be of one meaning and intent. Compare the parables in the thirteenth chapter of this gospel with the parables that are now before us, and see what a wonderful change has taken place in the tone of the Speaker. Whilst he was uttering his doctrine, delineating and exemplifying his gospel and offering it to all mankind, it was like a grain of mustard-seed, it was like a sower going forth to sow seed in various places, or like a leaven hidden in three measures of meal, or like a net cast into the sea which gathered of every kind. Now the parables are *judgments*: something has taken place between the thirteenth chapter of Matthew and the later chapters. The kingdom of heaven assumes another colour, speaks in another accent, exhibits itself in another phase. So wonderful is this kingdom—it is to you what *you are to it*: you determine the attitude of the kingdom of heaven towards yourselves. Be needy, be docile, be expectant of heavenly blessings, and the kingdom of heaven is like a great warm heaven shining upon all your life and offering you all its contents. Be rebellious, frivolous, contemptuous, self-sufficient, and the kingdom of heaven is dark with unspeakable tempests, ready to burst upon your life with overpowering destructiveness.

How if Jesus Christ saw the kingdom of heaven vary to his imagination and high fancy as the time bore him onward to the cross? How if he closed his eyes and compared the *outward* with the *inward*, as if he should say, "Now I see the kingdom of heaven like a man going forth to *sow seed*, and now I see it like a great *judgment*. Now it is like *leaven hid in three measures of meal*, and now it is like a *king taking account of his servants*"? He would be the great reader, the very seer which the times need; the eloquent soul clothed with prophetic mantle and speaking in

the thousand tones of apocalyptic language, who could see what the kingdom of heaven is like by correctly penetrating the spirit of his age and rightly reading all the meaning of the times passing over him. It is open to us to make parables according to the suggestion of events. Jesus Christ only begins the parables. He ended the *miracles*, he only *began* the parables, and it is for us to carry out those parables and multiply them according to the ever-varying colour and tone of the times in which we live. If so, the kingdom of heaven will be like a summer day, like a winter night, like an angel of hopefulness, blowing a silver trumpet and calling to a high banquet, or like a spirit, black, grim, fierce, vengeful, going forth to execute divine judgment upon stony hearts and rebellious lives.

Think not that the parables are *ended*. Truth has no conclusions, truth stops only to begin again : the miracle rounds itself up, or floats away like a gilded bubble and dies, but *truth* is a planet that belongs to the very centre of the system of things : it shines in the almightyess of God, and is re-fed, re-invigorated, from age to age, and grows younger with the time, and is more blooming after millenniums than when it first began to discover itself to the expectant mind. *Make your own parables* : do not read the weather only, read the signs of the times. Be not learned in the clouds, but learned in bodies celestial and in signs terrestrial, and in all your reading see some hint and outline of the divine kingdom.

Mark through the changes that the parables pass, the king is never *less* than king, and the heaven never other than a *kingdom*. He will take the kingdom of heaven, will this Jesus Christ, our Teacher, through all similitudes, but the king is never less than royal, and the thing spoken of is never less than kingly. Is it a sower going forth to sow ? He represents the *kingdom of heaven*. Is it a net cast into the midst of the sea, so humble and poor a thing as that ? Yes, but it bears upon it the similitude of a divine *kingdom*. The subject never lowers its dignity, the thing spoken of never falls below the royal mark. Observe that, for it is full of suggestion. Whether the king is coming to reign or coming to judge, whether he be mocked by his servants or kept standing outside the door knocking till his hair be wet with the dews of the

night, he is still the *King*, and the thing he brings is still the heavenly *kingdom*. Where there is humiliation there is no disgrace : the stoop is a royal one, and however humble and simple the similitude, it is like a dewdrop that throws back the image of the whole sun.

So in our simplicity we may have *dignity*, in the very humblest *form* through which we may pass our religious conceptions, they need never lose the grandeur of kingship or the splendour of royalty. In the simplest hymn sung to the simplest tune there may be the beginning of all heaven's harmony. In the quiet, silent stoop of the head, bending down in the attitude of prayer, without pomp or ceremony, there may be the beginning of the homage that makes heaven sacred. See that you do not find in simplicity any degradation of the thing signified—sowing seed, casting a net into the sea, permeating meal with leaven, finding pearls or treasures,—whatever you are doing, remember that the thing *signified* gives to the thing spoken and the thing done their natural measure of grandeur and sublimity. See in the church more than the stones and iron, the wood and glass. These things do not make the church ; the kingdom of heaven is like unto them, but if you seize the right idea of the edifice it will burn and glow and shine with infinite suggestion of comfort and meaning and hope. Let us not be *wooden* in God's house, literal and finite, mechanical and measurable, but pray for that *inward vision* that sees in every stone a son of Abraham, and hears in all the building of the church the resonance of infinite music. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

What have we then in this parable ? The strangest, sharpest *contrasts*. But first of all we have *God's conception* and God's purpose of grace and love towards the children of men. How does he put the case ? He will have a wedding, a feast, a great banquet : a thousand messengers going forth to call those that were bidden to the wedding. He will have trumpets and cymbals, and dances and high delight. Such is the conception of God always : he never makes less than a feast, no poor mean crust is it ever his to offer. If there be nothing else in the wilderness, he will make even that into a feast of fat things, and there shall be more at the end than there was at the beginning ; but in his original purpose,

when his heart speaks out of heaven, before the worlds are made, he says, " I will prepare for all coming ages and coming men an eternal wedding feast, banners, trumpetings, delights, raptures, satisfactions infinite." So he speaks in the background of his own eternity.

When did he ever do less ? We can hardly turn over two pages of the inspired Bible story without finding offers of milk and wine and honey and banquets and great feasts and sacred pleasures and unutterable delights. God's heart will heave right up through all the detail of our sin, torment, and pain, and will still speak hospitable things to the hungry life of human creatures. God wants us to eat and drink abundantly, God calls us to a feast—Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. That is the great cry, crashing, breathing, through the ages, with infinite energy of love : that is God's meaning about us all, to give us satisfaction, to take away the pain of hunger, the fire of thirst, and all that makes life a burden and a trouble. Give him credit for his *purpose*. God has to be *forced* into judgment : he comes of himself into *love*. You have to scourge him into a judicial attitude, mock him, taunt him, break every law he ever made, and spit in the face of his heavens, before he will put out his hand for the sword or the rod. But in himself, in all his heart, there is the one purpose of love, feasting, banqueting, enjoyment, eternal nourishment, and inward and spiritual delight and growth. Never miss this thought from your thinking, namely, God's original purpose, God's desire towards the children of men is one of *mercy*, pity, love, care, supply, answering prayer before the prayer is half spoken, and with a grand Amen realizing every petition uttered by the suppliant's pleading lips.

So we are sent forth this day with the call to a great banquet. In so far as a man is a true preacher of Christ he will call his people away from the land of hunger and thirst and want into a land of plenty flowing with milk and honey, and every field a vineyard and every rock a house of security. Shall I fall short of my mission ? I pray God I may answer its call, for he who is the King bids me tell every one who hears me and to speak the same message deeply to my own soul and with infinite unction to all, that God's purpose to-day and every day is that we should know no more the barrenness of desolation, the pain of hunger, the depri-

vations of thirst and the agony of weakness, but that we should all come unto his house and have the abundance of his grace and the infinite satisfaction of his truth.

My hospitable message is to every one that thirsteth, to every soul that feels pain, to every aching heart, to every life that says, “I have an aching void which only God can fill.” The gospel therefore is an answer to our *hunger*: the gospel is not a merely high intellectual delight, a system of spiritual metaphysics, having more or less ulterior moral aims and purposes: the gospel is an appeal to our sin, want, hunger, pain, helplessness—therefore do I always insist that credit should be given to the *original purpose* and design of the gospel, however much the gospel may have failed through false misrepresentation or through an unequal utterance of its hospitable purposes and welcomes.

We have also in this parable an instance of *human frivolousness*. The guests who were first invited, having heard the invitation, made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. So may great invitations become mere commonplaces, so may the great gospel become but as the sound of a noise in the air. Familiarity deprives us of much of the sublimity of the thing we look at. Could we think ourselves back, so as to feel in all its reality and intensity the fact that God was now inviting our souls to a great feast, surely there would be nothing light or frivolous in our whole temper. But the air is full of these invitations, and therefore our familiarity receives them without any sensation of surprise, much more, without any inspiration of gratitude. We know the *word* of the gospel so well that in hearing it we miss its *spirit*. Are we not ruined by our very familiarity with the letter? I ask the question with timidity, because of self-contempt herein, knowing how easy it is to speak syllables which enshrine the Deity without feeling their music in the very heart.

Frivolousness will ruin any life. No frivolousness succeeds in any great enterprise. No frivolous man succeeds in business of a commercial kind. Business is not a trick or an amusement, it is hard work, hard study, daily consideration, incessant planning, wakefulness that ought never to sleep. If so for a corruptible crown, what for an incorruptible? The danger is that we make light of the gospel because of our disregard for the *manner* in which it is spoken. Were we anxious about the vital

*matter* we should not care how it was uttered. All mere study of manner, and way of putting familiar truth, is an accommodation to the frivolity of the age. When we are told to make our services more interesting, our music more lively, our preaching more animated, we are but told to stoop to the frivolity of the time, that we may entrap a truant attention and arrest a wandering mind. Given, an anxious people, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, knocking at the church door, saying, “Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will enter in and be glad : this is the day the Lord hath made,” we need not study any mechanical arrangements, or urge ourselves to any unusual animation of manner : the urgency of our desire, the purity and nobleness of our sympathy would supply all the conditions required by the God of the feast, for the pouring out of heaven’s best wine and the preparation of all the fatlings of the heavens for the satisfaction of our hunger. God makes all the universe contribute to the soul’s growth. “My oxen and my fatlings are killed and ready, therefore come to the marriage.” He keeps back nothing from the soul, he plucks the highest grapes in the vineyards of heaven for the soul, he seeks out the goodliest and choicest of his possessions and treasures that the soul may be satisfied : he has kept back nothing : last of all he sent his Son, saying, “They will reverence my Son.” In that fact see the symbol of all that can be crowded into the suggestion that God withholds no good thing that can minister to the soul’s development, and the soul’s growth in truth and love and grace.

Nor does the human condition in relation to the divine offer conclude itself under the limitation of mere frivolities. You cannot stop at frivolity. Light-mindedness in this matter does not complete itself. “The remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully and slew them.” This is true frivolity. Frivolity is followed by *rebellion*, blasphemy, high crime and misdemeanour before the eye of heaven. You who laugh to-day may slay to-morrow, we who do make but gibes and sneers in relation to the gospel offers now, will by-and-by sit with the scornful and in deliberate blasphemy mock the King of the feast. Easy is the descent towards this deep pit of rebellion, hard-heartedness, and utter defiance of divine goodness. To defy the *good*—there might be some courage of a wild kind in defying *power*, in setting oneself

in defiant attitude against *thunderbolts*, but to defy *goodness*, to mock an offer of *hospitality*, to scorn the call to a divine delight—let a man once become frivolous in that direction, and the whole substance of his character will be depleted of everything that can be ennobled, and it will speedily sink in irremediable viciousness and baseness. Call it not a light thing to laugh at sacred words and religious opportunities and engagements : it may seem at the time to be of small account, but it is an indication of character, it is the beginning of a descent which multiplies its own momentum, and he who but laughs fluently and lightly to-day at the preacher's earnestness may in an immeasurably short space of time be reckoned with the scorners, and be the chief companion of fools.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment, and he asked him how this came to be, and the man was speechless, and the king ordered him out into punishment. We must not go into the feast according to *our own way* : there is an appointed road and an appointed method and scheme, and we must not attempt rudeness as an originality, we must not offend *the fitness of things*. We ourselves know the meaning of this in the lower ranges of architecture, painting, and music. A crooked pillar would instantly attract every eye and awaken every attention, and might probably arouse a suspicion of danger in many minds. Who could bear to look upon a crooked pillar supporting a roof ? Who would not run away from it ? A pillar has no right to be crooked, so to say : its usefulness is in its *uprightness* : in any other form it might suggest weakness and danger. So there are eyes that are trained to the instantaneous criticism of colour, that would be pained if they saw aught of discord or disharmony in the relation of hues, others could look on without surprise or trouble or conscious discord. If it be so in such little affairs as these, why not in the higher relations and the broader kingdoms ? When the king's eye rests upon the whole feast, he instantly detects aught of disharmony, want of obedience to the fitness of things and the genius of the place. The Oriental prince was accounted rich and noble in proportion as he piled up in his wardrobes it may be thousands of robes for wedding feasts and gala occasions. It was his business to supply the guests with garments. So with regard to this great feast in his kingdom ; he who finds the feast, finds the robe, and if we go in to his ban-

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quet we must go in clothed with his garments ; there must be nothing of our own in that gorgeous and grand delight. Herein we are all to blame ; man must have part of *himself* in it : he will do something towards contributing to the completion of God's purpose. Know ye, sons of men, that the feast is ready and the robe is ready, and neither is yours, both are the gifts of *God*, and we are asked to accept them now.

Many are called, but few are chosen. Many are named, but few are real. Of what avail, asks a Puritan writer, that you *call* your ship Invincible if the tiniest gun that ever was levelled against it smote its sides and crumbled it into small dust ? It is *called* but not chosen, named but not real, called a guest, but not a guest in *heart*. Your names are nothing, though given by your ancestors, though named at the baptismal font or in the river of baptismal water, though changed to indicate promotion and ascent in the social scale. Of what avail is it to call a man rich if he be poor in heart—magnificent in station if he be base in purpose and disposition ? Do not be frightened by this text as if God called a thousand men to him, then took out a certain number of the thousand and sent all the rest away. This is not the teaching of the divine gospel : read it thus :—Many are called, but few choose ; many are invited, but few come ; many are named, but few are real. Of what account is it to call a base metal silver ? Any acid dropped upon it will at once reveal the baseness of the compound. The face is silver, the coating is real, but skin deep lies the pewter, the mean lead, the comparatively worthless iron. Many are called, but few are real ; many are in the *building*, few in the *church* ; many read the *Book*, few peruse the *revelation*.

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### SELECTED NOTES.

Adam Clarke says : “ Among the Mohammedans, refusal to come to a marriage feast, when invited, is considered a breach of the law of God. Any one that shall be invited to a dinner, and does not accept the invitation, disobeys God and his messenger : and any one who comes uninvited, you may say is a thief and returns a plunderer.”

“ By the oxen understand the fathers of the Old Testament, by the fatlings understand the fathers of the New Testament ; for they did smite

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with the horn their enemies, and these mounted up aloft by the wings of heavenly contemplation."—(*Gregory.*) "Oxen are strong, and fatlings are sweet and pleasant ; hereby are set forth the oracles of God, which do both strengthen and delight those that feed upon them."—(*Origen.*) "They that excuse themselves by the occupying of a farm are the common people of the Jews, the other the priests and ministers about the temple."—(*Chrysostom.*)

## LXXXI.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, do thou write thy law upon our heart, and give us a disposition towards obedience, so that every word which thou hast spoken may become the rule of our conduct. To this end do thou grant us, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Priest, the continual ministry of the Holy Ghost, to enlighten the mind, to sanctify the will, to subdue and control the whole heart, so that there may be no disobedience or rebellion in us, but a quiet and loving delight in thy sacred word. We thank thee that thou hast addressed a speech to every heart : thou has left none out of the number to which thou hast spoken : may each hear the word thou hast sent to it in particular, and answer it with a readiness of joy and thankfulness—then shall our life spread itself out in beauty before thee, and shall receive the showers of thy blessing and answer them with growing fruitfulness.

Thy Son Jesus Christ hath revealed thee unto us : he is our Lord and Saviour, he made atonement for our sins, and his blood is the answer to thy law. We rejoice in the revelation of thy person which he has made unto us, now we pray for the healthful influences of thy Spirit, that we may read that revelation deeply and truly, and receive it into our hearts with all joyfulness, and manifest it unto the world according to our opportunity and power. We have come up to thine house that we may make mention of thy lovingkindness : surely thy mercies shall not lie forgotten in unthankfulness—we will preserve the memory of them, and in the rehearsal of all thou hast done for us in the years that are now gone, will we find the inspiration and the comfort we need for the days that are yet to come. We live in thy presence, thy goodness towards us is the sanctuary in which our souls dwell with the quietness of infinite security. Thou didst deliver us from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear : thou didst enable us to overcome the uncircumcised Philistine in the valley, and on the hill thy light has been round about us like a promise, and in all the winds that have blown around our life, we have heard the sound of thine own going. Therefore do we look onward to the unknown time, with the inspiration of gratitude, and the confidence of tender love. Thou wilt not bring down the grey hairs of thy servants with sorrow to the grave, thou wilt yet interpose in every crisis and difficulty, out of darkness thou wilt bring light, and thou wilt write songs for the night season. Give us confidence in these truths and hopes, yea establish us and build us upon them as upon rocks that cannot be shaken.

May our whole life rise upon thee like a temple towards the Heavens, complete and beautiful and resonant with thy praise.

Thou hast been mindful of us : we should be witnesses against ourselves if we denied thy care or questioned thy providence. Every day uttereth speech to us concerning thy love. Wherein we have done wrong thou wilt come to us with infinite forgiveness. Where sin abounds grace shall, through Christ Jesus the Lord, much more abound, so that the littleness of the one shall not be thought of because of the greatness of the other. By grace are we saved, by blood are we cleansed, by the precious blood of Christ are we redeemed. We know our ransom price, and we know thou hast not paid it in vain—thou wilt surely redeem us utterly, and bring us with completeness out of the snare of him who would entangle us, and out of the wilderness of despair and loneliness. Our hope is in Christ, our confidence is in God, our inspiration is from the Holy Ghost

Thou knowest our life in its entirety : how few its days, how small its strength, how easily blown out its best hopes, and how soon blighted its noblest ambitions. Thou hast dug a grave in the garden, thou hast hidden a pit under the hearthstone, there is poison in the cup out of which we drink our life, and our whole course lies through thorns and thickets and most difficult places. Yet surely our extremity will be the opportunity of God, and because of the supreme difficulty of the road shall be the fulness and the tenderness of the ministry which waits upon us.

We now lovingly put ourselves into thine hands, to be conducted as thou wilt through all difficulties and snares. Disappoint us if it be for our souls' health that we should be stung and wounded and have sudden night descending upon our brightest days. Do thou hunger us and impoverish us and give us pain continually if it can be only through this process that we may be saved. Not our will but thine be done, only take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

Regard us in our special relationships, and according to our necessity let the blessing of the Most High God come to us this day. Preserve the little one that he may become a strong man, speak to the aged that he may renew his youth in the immortal hope of fellowship with the angels and with the spirits of the just made perfect. Address the busy man who is seeking his fortune in the dust, and excite in his soul a hunger which the bread of life alone can satisfy. Tell the afflicted that the time of weakness is but for a moment, and the time of immortal health is as the duration of God. Regard all who rule over us in the kingdom, preserve the wise and the strong for many years, that they may surpass themselves in the nobleness of their patriotism and their trust in the God of nations.

Be with all for whom we ought to pray and for whom it is our loving delight to intercede. For the absent, for the travelling, for those who are in danger, in weakness, in peculiar sorrow, in sharp agony. Be with those who are going through their highest joys, and with those who are far out in the deep waters of peculiar trouble. Sanctify all varieties of

discipline and training through which we pass, and at last, washed in the blood of the everlasting covenant, sanctified and inspired by God the Holy Ghost, may we take our place in the city whose hills are light, whose walls are jasper, whose streets are gold. Amen.

### Matthew xxii. 15-46.

15. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle (ensnare) him in his talk.

16. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians (advocates of national submission to the emperor), saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man : for thou regardest not the person of men.

17. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou ? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not ?

18. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites ?

19. Shew me the tribute money (the denarius, which was in common circulation). And they brought unto him a penny.

20. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription ?

21. They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's.

22. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

23. The same day came to him the Sadducees (largely the upper classes of the priesthood), which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

24. Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25. Now there were with us seven brethren : and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother :

26. Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27. And last of all the woman died also.

28. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven ? for all had her.

29. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err (a less stern tone than that in which the Pharisees were accosted), not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

33. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine (teaching).

34. But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36. Master, which (what kind) is the great commandment in the law? (The meaning of this question was, whether anything were more perfect than the law, because he taught a new kind of doctrine, whereby the expounders of the law held themselves to be disgraced).

37. Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38. This is the first and great commandment.

39. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

41. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42. Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

43. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

46. And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

### TEMPTING QUESTIONS AND DIVINE ANSWERS.

**Y**OU will notice that the attacks which were made upon the Saviour were *prepared*. There is evidence everywhere of premeditation, arrangement, concert, so that there might be no weakness on the part of those who were about to approach the great and marvellous Teacher. No *notice* was sent of the questions: the preparation was complete on the side of the interrogators without Jesus Christ having any intimation that an attack was about to be made upon him. So far the advantage was upon the side of the questioners. They talked the whole matter over, they proposed and re-arranged and amended, and then settled the terms: having done so, they went with unanimous purpose to ensnare the Speaker.

Not only so, the questions were subtly *adapted* to the then state

of the Speaker's mind. We have just seen that he was uttering parables of judgment in place of parables of illustration. His parabolical tone had changed completely. In the thirteenth chapter of this gospel, he spoke, as we have repeatedly said, a whole picture gallery of beauties into existence. Since the time of his revelation of his personality to his disciples, he has been speaking parables of fire, judgment, anathema, fraught with most searching and terrible penal criticism. The people round about him, therefore, had supposed that he was *excited*, and knowing what they themselves were when under excitement, they supposed they would catch this marvellous Speaker at a great disadvantage ; he had lost his balance, he was off his guard, he was goaded into an unusual strain of adjuration, and now in this changed temper of his mind, they would very likely be able to ensnare him in his speech, and so to accomplish their own malign purpose.

Still further, the attacks were not inspired by love of truth or by anxiety to know God's mind upon this or that subject, but by *hatred of the Man*. Hence we have the most unusual combinations of parties, hence we have the horse and the ass yoked together in one team, hence we have colours that ought never to have been brought into juxtaposition, stitched together, hence we have contrasts which under other circumstances would be accounted anomalies and would evoke destructive criticism,—but *any* union will do where such a Man's life is to be taken !

In the gospel by Luke, we read that these persons approached Christ feigning themselves to be just men, painting their faces with the colours of justness, borrowing clothes of righteousness and respectability, assuming with fatal skill the very tone of earnestness. Yet under all this feigning and similitude and hypocrisy, their aim was not to inquire about truth, its foundations and responsibilities and issues, but to strike with a dart the life of an excited Man.

This point is the one which brings its severe lesson to us. Herein we find the reality of the inspiration of the attacks which are made upon Christianity *to-day*. When men go forward to assail the Book, why do they exhibit so much anxiety to dispute its claim and invalidate its integrity and enfeeble its hold upon the attention of mankind ? Judging by history, it is no whit uncharitable to suggest that they are not so anxious about its literary discrepancies

and incoherencies and difficulties, as that they hate its *morali**ties*. It would be worth the while of any number of men to pay ten thousand pounds down to-day on any counter, if they could buy themselves off from the *moral discipline* of the Scriptures. Such an investment would be the beginning of their fortune from a merely secular point of view. The rope would be broken, the tether would be snapped, the chain that binds them would give way at its strongest link, and men would be free to do what they pleased. What wonder then if oftentimes they should shape themselves into little deputations and go in twos and threes for the purpose of asking questions about the *literary* part of the Bible, when the real heart and core of their purpose is to rid themselves of its *moral rule*?

How can I be charged with uncharitableness in making such a suggestion, when I have before me Pharisees and Herodians feigning themselves to be just persons, who go to ask a question about the tribute money, not that they care either for the Cæsar or the Jew in this or that particular, but that they want to ensnare an excited Man in his fluent and vehement eloquence? Let every man search himself in this matter. What if we go to the Bible for the purpose of propounding difficulties and asking religious questions, and take upon us the air of injured critics and anxious pilgrims, having but one supreme purpose, and that to find out the literal word and meaning of God, and in reality we want to rid ourselves of the *humiliations* of the Book? The Book takes no note of king or peasant, gentle or simple, rich or poor, but judges every man on the broad basis of manhood and sinfulness and dishonoured obligation, and commands every man to his knees, to put his mouth in the dust and to say, “Unclean, unclean.” What if we want to escape its humiliations, under the mean pretence of wanting to rearrange its translation, and revise its literature, and throw into new arrangements that which is historical, chronological, and of antiquarian interest? Search your heart in this matter, say why you do go to the Book or to Christ. Do you feign to be just men when in reality you want to put your knife through the Bible’s morality and to rid yourselves of the daily discipline of its abasements and humiliations? Be severe with yourself on this matter; do not play the fool to *yourself*, and never lose the dignity and the restfulness of your self-respect.

So much for the attacks which were made upon Jesus Christ. Now let us turn and look at the *answers* which he made to the onslaughts. Note in the first place that Jesus Christ's answers were *extemporaneous*, and herein they stand in contrast to the first point made, that the attacks of the enemy were premeditated and arranged. Speaking from a purely human point of view, the assailants knew by heart every word they were going to say, but Jesus Christ had no knowledge or intimation of the questions that were about to be put to him. His answers therefore were not prepared, studied, arranged, and calculated as to the force and value of words. Herein an argument begins. It surely cannot be an easy thing to answer the supreme intellects of the age, instantaneously, when they put knotty questions, yet *this* is the very thing Jesus Christ does. He never says, "The question is a novel one, I must consider it." We have seen old judges upon the English bench posed by novel suggestions or constructions of the law, and the hoary and learned men have had to ask to be permitted to consult some brother judge because of the novelty of the situation. This is wise on the part of all merely human critics, because no man is all men, and no man knows or can know so much as all men know. Consultation, therefore, and comparison of men's thoughts is not only desirable but just and right in all merely human consultations and inquiries. But here is a man who consults nobody, who asks for no time to think, who answers with the suddenness and the brilliance of lightning. Touch him, and you are healed, if the touch be that of faith. Speak to him, and you evoke a revelation; pray to him, and the whole firmament widens into a great answer to your request, wherein it is just and proper. But never was he to be allowed to consult the authorities or to take into his confidence the learned men of his day. He drew from the quiver of his own heart every arrow that he required. From the fulness of his grace he drew every gospel adapted to his age,—from the infiniteness of his own sufficiency he satisfied the hunger of the world.

But an answer may be extemporaneous and nothing more. It may be as instant as lightning, and yet there may be nothing in it but words. But in this case we have the answers before us, and with those answers open to our criticism we may surely pronounce

them to be *intellectually acute*. Sit down in your quietest leisure, when your head is coolest and your mind is steadiest, and try to *amend* any answer that is here given. Take paper and pen and ink, and in the mood of mind at which you are at your very best, write out a thousand possible answers to the attacks of the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees and the Lawyers. Rearrange your replies, pick out the choicest English in which to express them, and when you have done, you will find that you cannot amend in one line or tone or hue the answers which are here given, perfect in wit, covering the whole case, silencing with gags—for that is the true rendering of the speechlessness of the assailants—those who made the attack. He put gags in their mouths, and forced them into silence. The dumbness was reluctant, but it was not to be broken through.

Sometimes we think only of Jesus Christ as a good man, kind-hearted, full of love, always trying to make the world better, yea even to save the world. All that is right, but we ought sometimes to consider the simple *intellectual force* and majesty of this unique mind. Christ had a great heart—true—but do not therefore disparage his *mind*. It suits the purpose of some persons to regard Jesus Christ as morally noble, but intellectually feeble. Wherein is the intellectual feebleness shown? Certainly not in this instance. The answer about the tribute money was an answer surprising and conclusive as a revelation from heaven. There was nothing else to be said; no man could add a word to it without spoiling its infinite simplicity, no mind can suggest a new turn to the phrase without trying to bend the sky into a completer circle.

Not only so—for in that he might simply have been the greater wit of the two—his answers were profoundly *Scriptural*. Take the instance of the resurrection of the dead. What was his reply? Was there any shuffling here, or any disposition to evade the difficulty? He said, in effect, “Sadducees, you are perfectly right from your point of view. The anecdote is exactly as you have related it; I myself knew all the circumstances of the case—a very surprising instance indeed, rarely to be met with, and from your point of view it must really shape itself into something like a fatal argument. But, gentlemen, where you get wrong is in your foundation. You have nothing to stand upon but a handful of sand: I take it away and down you drop—the whole fabric, anec-

dote, historians, and critics, and all. Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God. You omit from your calculation the two great factors, you are perplexed by *details*, you rest upon no infinite rock.” And they all were gagged. When the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine, or astonished at his teaching. Not so much at the substance as in the new *way* in which he put old truths and avowed revelations, and under his setting these old things shone with a new light. Herein is the greatness of all true teaching—not to be inventing new theories and hypotheses, but so to set the old truth as to give it modern force, so to interpret the eternal as to make it a gospel to the dying firme.

Poor Sadducees! I pity the Pharisees about their penny, and the Sadducees about their one little anecdote. Both parties seem to have been deprived of their one ewe lamb. It is sad to see how these little critics who suppose they had a case against Christ, have the case taken right out of their hands and turned to the advantage of the other side. I never knew a critic go away from Christ otherwise than with a slouching gait and with a kind of unconfessed wish that he had never made such a fool of himself as to go and touch that burning mountain.

Do not let us be misled by little cases that occur, by parochial anecdotes and by local circumstances that appear to contravene the infinite revelation of God. Let your circumstances go down and accommodate themselves to the eternal. Woe to the peace of any man who lives in mere details.

How did Jesus *know* all these Scriptures? He himself *wrote* them. The Scriptures were quoted from him, he did not quote from the Scriptures. He only quotes *himself*, and quotes himself with the emphasis which the writer of any deep literature alone can give to his own words.

I must add that the answers were *complete*. From our point of view we cannot suggest a solitary deficiency in the replies. He does not evade the question, but addresses himself honestly, morally, to the difficulty that was put before him. A lawyer thought he could put a case that might puzzle this singular Teacher. “Which is the great commandment of the law?” Jesus answered, “Thou shalt love.” That must have been a sur-

prise to any man who was nothing but a lawyer—thou shalt love. It does not read like a legal phrase—thou shalt love. And yet Jesus says, “ I did not invent that expression : you will find it in the law”—and he goes to the very chapter with which he himself seems to have been peculiarly familiar, for in the Temptation in the wilderness, two of his quotations were out of that very self-same chapter. And now when the lawyer comes to him, probably an emissary of an old tempter, he answers him out of the same chapter. Wonderful things you will find in any chapter of the Bible if you dig for them as for hidden treasure, and search it as for surprises of incalculable value. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. What can be a completer answer to the inquiry of the lawyer than “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ” ? and to accommodate himself still further to the lawyer’s possible condition, he says, “ There is another commandment very nearly as great,” and looking at him like a judgment, searching him through and through like a fire, he said, “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” If a lawyer can do that, I know not what he cannot do.

We too send deputations to Christ, send our *Criticism* to him, and we say in effect, “ Jesus, son of David, behold the document : we find that the date in this place does not accord with the date in that place ; we find that one Evangelist relates a circumstance in one way, and another evangelist relates the same circumstance in another way. Now what are we to do ? ” And instantly he says, “ You are not saved by the literary coherencies of the Book, but by its *moral consistency*. Look for its consistency in its consistent demands for righteousness and truth and purity and honour.” Then our Criticism coming away from him, we send up our *Curiosity*, and curiosity, feigning itself to be very reverent and profoundly inquisitive in a right spirit, says, “ Jesus, why not tell us more about heaven and hell, about the invisible world generally ? ” and instantly he answers, “ I have told you enough for life, conduct, discipline, sanctification : use what you do know, and he that is faithful in little, shall afterwards be appointed ruler over many cities.” Then we send up to him our *Vulgarity*, and the vulgarity says to him broadly, “ Why is there so much *mystery* about this Book, why not make things much *plainer* ? ”

and he answers, "The mystery is in yourself : there is no mystery in the Book that has not its counterpart in the mystery of your own psychology : *you* are the mystery, and until you recognise that fact, you will never rise to the occasion demanded of you as true students of the Book, which is not an invention *apart* from mankind, but a revelation to *human nature* as it is now constituted."

The questions are over, the assailants are quiet. "Now," says Jesus, "if you *do* want to ask a question that is a real difficulty from your point of view, I will put it into your possession : you shall have a really hard and deep question. Now, what think ye of the Christ?" Not—"What think ye of me as the Christ?" but—"What think ye of the Christ that is promised in your books? Whose son is he?" And they instantly answer like a number of children who had learned the Catechism, "The son of David." "Now how then doth David in spirit call him Lord? If David call him Lord, how is he his son?" A difficulty indeed to the *literal* intellect, a difficulty to those who live in pen and ink, a difficulty to those who suppose there is no multiplication beyond what is literally given in the multiplication table,—yet no difficulty at all to the *reverent imagination*, that higher and sublimer life that embraces the whole revelation of God in its noblest suggestiveness. If the Christ were only the son of David, he could never be David's Lord : the fact that David sets lordship above sonship suggests that this Man is Wonderful, Emmanuel, God with us, a ladder with the foot on the earth, with the head bathed in the glad heavens. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. "Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, Lawyers," said he, "do not trouble yourselves about the tribute money, and questions of succession in family relationships : do not trouble yourselves with the merely numerical relationships of the points of the law, but do ask *deep* questions, grand questions, massive, noble questions, get up into the *higher region* of thinking, and there learn how possible it is for reason to blossom into faith, and for the hard, literal intellect to bow down in tender homage before the infinite God."

Such are the infinite retorts of Christ. Be sure, when you go to him with a question, that it is neither little nor irreverent.

**SELECTED NOTES.**

*Verse 21.—“And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.”*

*Render.*—A clear acknowledgment of the divine authority of human government.

1. Though they went to pay Cæsar’s tribute, they were not to adopt Cæsar’s religion.

The paying earthly tribute does not defraud the Lord’s service.

“Fear God, honour the king.” 1 Peter ii. 17.

“Curse not the king, no not in thy thought.” Eccles. x. 20.

“Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” Acts xxiii. 5.

“The wicked are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” 2 Peter ii. 10.

2. *Obedience to the laws.* “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.” Rom. xiii. 1.

“Use not your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.” 1 Peter ii. 16.

“License they mean, when liberty they cry.” Milton.

There are times when resistance becomes a virtue. Psalm cxlix. 8, 9.

## LXXXII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou givest the Holy Spirit unto men, that they may be enlightened and sanctified and made like thyself. If men being evil know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more will our Father which is in Heaven give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him. We come to ask for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the Church of the redeemed, bought not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lamb of God. He promised us another Paraclete, that should abide with the Church forever, even the Holy Spirit that should lead men into all truth, making them quiet with divine peace, beautiful with divine holiness, inspiring them every day with the love of truth and with the spirit of devotion to the highest service of mankind. We now look for the pentecost, we are gathered together with one accord in one place ; withhold not thou the gift for which we have come, but multiply it unto every one of us—the great gift of thy love. Holy Spirit, baptize us as with fire, Spirit of the living God, descend upon us, consuming all evil, encouraging all goodness, strengthening within us every vow that is made with an honest purpose and with a good hope, and granting unto us such communications of divine grace as shall give us nourishment and comfort in the day of trial and distress.

Withhold not thy Spirit from us, grant him unto us in such measure as we are able to receive the gift, and may we prove that the Spirit has been given unto us by the newness of our speech, by the nobleness of our behaviour, and by such manifestations as shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. Thou dost not keep back from those who seek it, this great gift of the Holy Spirit : we pray for it with one consent, and look for it with one eager expectation. Give this unto us, and behold we shall be made anew, we shall be born again, we shall enter into thy service with a new consecration, our life shall be made glad by a new hope, and all the outgoing of life shall be in the direction of Christ's own beneficence.

We bless thee for the Saviour who promised this Holy Spirit : he is our one Priest and Lord and King, the only wise God, who only hath immortality, Potentate over all, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world the Saviour of all men. May we read his character more clearly, apprehend his purpose more completely, and live in his spirit with more entireness of sympathy. We would grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; we would be no more children,

tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but men, strong, simple, true in heart, honest in purpose, ever striving with all the devotion of love, to become the sons of God in very deed, that by the manifestation of good purpose and good work, we may help to overthrow him who is the evil one. Hear us in these desires, and cause thine answers to be multiplied unto us that we may rejoice in the Lord and have renewal of every sacred hope.

We bless thee for all thy patience, tenderness, and continual goodness of intention towards us. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance, yet do we take thy gifts and set our feet upon them, nor do we understand their value—yea, we have trampled under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant. God be merciful unto us sinners, and give us to feel that all the dispensations of providence are meant to lead us up to the completer dispensation of grace. In thy goodness may we see thy mercy, in thy mercy may we behold thy love of thine own image in every human creature ; thus may we be led to the cross, which gathers up in one ineffable expression of tenderness the infinite love of thine heart.

Thou hast led us by ways that we knew not, but all thy leading has been good. When thou hast made us poor we have been rich, when the darkness has been of thy sending, it has been full of stars, when thou hast brought us low thou hast spoken unto us the gospel of future exaltation. Wherein we have brought all mischief and distress upon ourselves, we would mourn the sin which caused the grief, and seek in one unanimous prayer the forgiveness which it is thine alone to exercise. Thou knowest each life, its pain, its want, its heavy load, the aching of every heart, the tears that blind our eyes, the sudden darkness that falls upon our way—regard us in thy tender pity, let the messages of thy truth to us be according to the strain that is put upon us. Regard with Fatherly tenderness all for whom we ought to pray—the sick, the dying, the hearts that are ill at ease—those who are travelling for the good of their health or for the extension of honourable commerce ; the young who are full of blessedness and new hope and a song of gladness they never sung before ; the prodigal, the wanderer far beyond any prayer of ours, lying as it were barely within the sweep of thine own infinite love, bring home and restore to sonship.

The Lord hear us, the God of Jacob put around us his everlasting arms, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ comfort us with some new degree of grace. Amen.

### Matthew xxiii.

1. Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
2. Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat :
3. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ; but do not ye after their works ; for they say, and do not.
4. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them

on men's shoulders ; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

5. But all their works they do for to be seen of men : they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

6. And love the uppermost rooms (first places) at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues (Jerusalem end),

7. And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

8. But be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren.

9. And call no man your father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10. Neither be ye called masters (directors of conscience) : for one is your Master, even Christ.

11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

13. But woe unto (for) you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

14. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

15. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte (proselytes were regarded as the leprosy of Israel, and hindered the coming of the Messiah), and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell (worthy of hell) than yourselves.

16. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing ; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor !

17. Ye fools and blind : for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ?

18. And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing ; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19. Ye fools and blind : for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ?

20. Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith : these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24. Ye blind guides, which strain at (out) a gnat, and swallow a camel (an unclean beast, Lev. xi. 4).

25. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup, and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! because ye build the tombs of the prophets (four of which were then visible at the base of the Mount of Olives), and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous (actions good in themselves become wrong in the hands of hypocrites).

30. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33. Ye serpents, ye generation (brood or progeny) of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ?

34. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes : and some of them ye shall kill and crucify ; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city :

35. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !

38. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

### A FOURFOLD ASPECT OF CHRIST.

JESUS CHRIST had just received a deputation of the Pharisees and the Herodians. The same day he had received a deputation of Sadducees, and the same day it would appear he had answered a tempting question put to him by a lawyer, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" We have seen that Jesus Christ utterly humiliated all the men that came to him with questions that were meant to tempt him and to ensnare him in his talk. He inflicted upon them the most desperate chastisement. According to the statement of the text, he gagged them. We read, "he put them to silence," literally he put the gag in their mouths, and made them quiet because they could not answer his great expositions.

It might be thought, therefore, that he had cleanly swept out the whole church of his time, had dismantled it and had visited it with complete and perpetual disinheritance, so that he stood before his age as a mere image-breaker, an iconoclast, a man who smote all existing things of a religious kind, and poured upon them and upon their teachers all manner of severe and destructive contempt. Yet how he spreads himself over the whole occasion ; he will not allow that inference to be drawn ; knowing that in every crowd there is a preponderance of foolish and unreasonable men, he instantly takes up an affirmative and constructive attitude, and says, ere the great throngs break up, "Whatsoever the scribes and Pharisees bid you observe, that observe and do : but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." Still he is consistent with himself : not one good word will he bestow upon the scribes and Pharisees as such, but he says the law must not suffer because its interpreters are weak or vile men. The law is an eternal quantity, a perpetual dignity that can never be impaired even by the vilest behaviour of those who interpret it and enforce it ; that law must stand.

You will see therefore that he was not a mere *destructionist* : it was not Christ's purpose to dishonour the law or to enfeeble its application in any sense. He is saying in these latter chapters of the gospel, precisely what he said in the sermon on the mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Till heaven and earth

pass away, one jot or one tittle of the law shall in no wise pass away.” Yet he rebukes with no stinted reproach those who had fallen below the dignity and holiness of their sacred vocation. The line he draws is broad, palpable, never to be confused indeed, and in drawing that line he displayed, if we may speak humanly of him, one of the finest qualities of his spirit and character.

He did more. This was not *local* talk, this was not a speech spoken to a few people now dead and gone. In this exhortation Christ touches and refutes a sophism that has found its utterance in *all ages* of civilized history. What is that sophism? That if a man shall do anything bad, everything good that he touches is to be condemned along with himself. Is not that the sophism of to-day? A man who reads the Bible has been found to do something wrong: instantly there are persons who say, “This comes of your Bible-reading, then no more Bible-reading for me.” Such is the witless assault that is made on the eternal Book! The Bible *reader* is bad, therefore the *Bible* is bad—such the dishonest logic, the corrupt and consciously corrupt reasoning of men who want to escape Bible morality and Bible discipline.

A man who goes to church has been found to defraud his creditors, to speak profane words, to do some deed accounted bad by social critics, be that deed what it may, and instantly the criticism falls upon the church within whose walls no bad man ever heard one word of encouragement. Put it to yourselves and say whether we may not have sometimes been tempted to say, “If these are your Christians, no more Christians for us.” Observe the vacant reasoning, the poor, incoherent, insane form of argument, without the substance or the power thereof. You have found a counterfeit coin, and therefore you give up the currency of the realm. Some man has forged the signature of another, and therefore you will not believe a single letter which your child writes to you. There is falsehood, therefore there is no truth. Who would accept statements so palpably and intolerably absurd? Yet these statements are considered sufficient to pick up sharp stones and throw at the mouth of the Son of God; when he speaks the great gospel of truth and love and redemption, any fist will do to smite that mouth, any staff will do to strike that Teacher. It is because we want to strike him dumb that we avail ourselves of arguments so unsound as to be not lies only but blasphemies.

It may have been so in your house—let me localise the appeal. yea personalize it, after the manner of the Master in this very chapter. When the one professing Christian in your house—there is but one, poor speckled bird—did something wrong, through that wrong-doer you sought to thrust a dagger into his Master's heart. Remember your taunt, your bitter sneer, your ungenerous and ignoble word : it was not the individual before you that you wounded only, but through that individual you sought to put your sword's sharp point into the heart of the Son of God.

Let us now—passing from this part of the subject—look at Christ as the centre of the great multitude of scribes and Pharisees whom he addressed in the eloquent maledictions which are recorded in this chapter. It may assist the imagination and may bring the whole scene with its moral suggestions more vividly around us, if we think of Christ standing *to-day* in any Christian community, surrounded by men who have been playing falsely with his name. The scribes and Pharisees were *present* : he was not hurling maledictions upon the *absent*. When did Jesus Christ ever address persons who were not actually before him ? See the great throng of false men, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, blind leaders of the blind, all around him, and then hear this terrible speech. It was a day of judgment in very deed. There was great lightning and thunder that day, the earth palpitated to the resounding eloquence, and the heavens vibrated as the eloquent tones fell from the lips divine. The men could not run away, he fastened them to the earth : they could not lift their fingers to put into their ears, for he held them down, and that day he spoke as he had never spoken before in fulness and breadth and fierceness of moral indignation. The men were fascinated, spellbound—a subtle wizardry held them fast in positions from which they would most gladly have extricated themselves, but not until He who was the Master willed it, were they permitted to lift a foot from the ground and to pass away to their occupations and their homes.

Hearing Christ's great speech, what do we learn about him ? We see in him *a devotion to truth which clothed him with sublimest fearlessness*. How he talks, how he insults the men, how he beards them, how he lays his great grip upon them and shakes them, and they cannot answer him a word. What is the explana-

tion of this mighty mastery over the leading spirits of his time ? Is he speaking resentfully ? No, for the men who speak resentfully are weak ; strong only for one little moment, but it is a strength of desperation, to be succeeded by most pitiful reaction. Account for that fearlessness. You will find no suggestion that covers the whole occasion but the suggestion now named—devotion to truth, so complete, so profound, as to lift the man above all fear. See if there be not a deep philosophy in that fact. Men are not continuously and coherently strong except in proportion to their devotion to truth : such men are sublimated by their devotion, they are lifted up into a new and larger self-hood : it is no longer they that speak, but God that speaketh in them. The action is not to be measured by their personality, they stand as representatives of the majesty and grandeur of truth, they are the heroic expressions of a heroic principle. You will only be strong in proportion as the truth—not some side, point, or aspect of it, but *the truth*—is in you.

How is it that we have so much *breaking down* in Christian testimony, so much ambiguity and equivocation and uncertainty ? How is it that we have so much paltering with vow and oath and high resolution ? Simply because the *complete truth* is not in us, or our devotion to truth is merely to some side or aspect of it. Jesus Christ could say that he was *Himself* the truth. The Truth never blushed, never stammered, never apologised, never asked for leave to be. The tone of truth cannot change, it is royal, commanding : if audacious, simply because complete and infallible. We should be on our guard lest we seize only some *points* of truth, and take, as we sometimes ignorantly phrase it, our *stand* upon particular doctrines. There are no particular doctrines, in the sense of separate and isolated doctrines, in truth. *Truth is one*. We call the bigot a *strong* man simply because he is a *narrow* one and moves in a special direction, and we call the devotee of truth sometimes a latitudinarian, because he does not live under a ceiling but under a sky ; he is not bounded by walls ecclesiastical, but by the infinite horizon drawn by the infinite hand.

Do not be strong on particular doctrines and seek to develop special virtues, and to have pet graces : live in truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. When we touch that high region of perfect devotion to complete truth, we shall not know what fear

is. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. The true man does not know when the clouds gather or when the storm roars around him ; he says the storm will cry itself to rest, the tornado will blow itself out in silence, and “ truth must stand when all things fail.”

Looking at Jesus Christ again, standing in the midst of that great seething multitude of scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, and blind teachers, I see in him *an insight into truth which gave him infinite pre-eminence as a Teacher*. How he destroys the sophisms of the blind men ! He says, “ Ye blind guides which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing ; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor ! Ye fools and blind : for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing ; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind : for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ?”

His all-piercing insight into truth lifts him above all competing teachers. Here we see somewhat of his intellectual breadth and grandeur coupled with a moral indignation, that becomes impatient in the very tones which it utters. How he must have said these words : again and again are they repeated : “ Ye fools and blind, how is it that you do not see the right relation and proportion of things ? How is it that you mistake the *near* for the *great*, the temporal for the eternal ? What has become of your common sense, or ordinary natural reason, that you set all things in a row without attention to perspective and distance and light and shadow and expressive and interpreting colour ? What has fallen upon you, what dementation is this, what sudden insanity, what moral obliquity ? Why, you have lost the first conception of truth, and you have betaken yourselves to metaphysical quibbles and puzzles unworthy of the intellect with which God endowed you.”

This is the inevitable course of wrong thinking in religious matters. Men make vain distinctions, they create a series of puzzles, they have so much leisure that it becomes a *temptation* to them. This is the danger of the church to-day. We are so overfed with gospel, we are so churched and preached to death, that men are now beginning to turn into mechanical *puzzles* the im-

measurable, impalpable, infinite truth of God. We are now creating sects, schools, denominations, and so-called churches and communions. I would God that some fire of persecution should break out amongst us to force us back to great principles, to a proper distinction between the temple and the gold, the altar and the gift, that we may not be inverting things and putting them into false relations and proportions. If the wolf would come back, the old grey wolf that barked at our heroic fathers, watched for them, showed its gleaming teeth whenever they came in sight, sprang upon them, sucked their blood—we should get back to right ideas of inspiration, truth, prayer, missions, evangelisation, and should cease the small talk about mechanism and fine distinctions and the distribution of labour—so diffuse as to lose its intensity and divest itself of the force that makes wicked kingdoms tremble.

What is our insight into truth? Do we *see* it—the word that Amos *saw*? We have only heard it in trembling and fading echoes. The word that Hosea *saw*, that sight turns a poor man into a rich one, that sight turns a herdman into a prophet, that sight marks the critical point in all human history. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall . . . SEE God.

Let us consider—are we wood-splitters, are we puzzle-makers in the church, or are we *inspired* men? Are we the frightened, the timid, the conventional, and those who live only on the surface? The church has lost *inspiration*. The church—poor, poor fool—she has allowed every thief to take from her what he liked. The felon has taken from her miracles and tongues and prophesying and gifts of healing, and inspiration and Christ—except as a great historical genius—and the cross, except as it represents a heroic but vain sentiment. And the felon is now cozening her with a view of lifting off her *GOD*. Poor church! Only insight into truth will bring back her possessions.

Do not be clever on points: do not give yourselves to a kind of *nisi prius* sharpness. If Burke was right when he said that no man understood the English constitution so little as a merely *nisi prius* lawyer, surely we are giving legitimate extension to the truth when we say that no man understands Christ so little as the man who makes sects in his name. Christ is not here, nor there, nor yonder, he is not to be localised, he is the breath, the life of all

things. There be men who say, ‘Lo, Christ is here, and lo, Christ is there,’ and if another man should arise amongst us to say, ‘Christ is everywhere—Christ is in Hindooism, Christ was in the Pagan philosophy, Christ has been in every civilisation that has rolled its particular course over all languages and nations,’ he would be accounted latitudinarian. Be it mine to see in every flower a child of the sun, and in every noble deed and heroic impulse an inspiration of the Son of God.

Looking again at that wondrous Speaker as he fastens his hearers around him, I see in him *a grasp of truth which enabled him to represent its continuity through the ages*. Observe how he goes backward and how he goes forward. He says, “Ye say, if we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Ye would—ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, ye *would!* Do you suppose that this kind of conduct depends on climate, on particular details of time and space? If you had lived in the days of Zacharias you would have killed him on the very spot where he fell under your fathers’ hand. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, ye progeny of hell, ye *would!*” So does he grasp the truth! He would have pleased the people better if he had said, “You would not have done what your fathers did, you are much better men, much nobler and kinder persons: it would never have occurred to you surely to have imbrued your hands in the righteous blood of Abel: it would never have occurred to your refined sentiment to have had anything to do murderously with Zacharias the son of Barachias.” He might have bought himself a cheap popularity by such vulgar lies, but looking at them, piercing them, seeing all history in one grand continuity, he said, “Ye blind guides, evil never changes; a serpent is always a serpent: you have the serpent spirit in you, and until you are born again you would have done just what your fathers did. Fill up the measure of their iniquity—they filled the cup nearly to the brim, pour it full up, till the drops fall on your feet, and when your mission is fulfilled, God will find a place for you in his Gehenna.”

We have then to deal with a Man who knows all things, who is not to be betrayed into small sophisms and into narrow deductions, who looks around the horizon. What think ye of the Christ—of

his *eloquence?* How it rolls and scorches like floods of lava. We teach our boys at school the Philippics of Demosthenes, and say, "Look at his interrogations : the mark of interrogation is the chief point of punctuation upon his eloquent pages. How he hurls his questions, how every question sharpens itself like a dagger that is seeking the blood of the accused one." There is nothing, by the common consent of men who are entitled to judge upon the matter, in all eloquence, ancient or modern, to compare, for grandeur of malediction, for moral nobleness, for intellectual insight, with the eloquence of this denunciation of Christ's.

Then I see in it, last of all, *an experience of truth, which made Christ the greatest of evangelists.* He would not conclude with objurgation. The truth does not make him stiff, imperious, self-involved : his love of the truth, his experience of it in his own heart, is such that he wants every living man to feel it as he does. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" Why? Because he would have all men know the truth as he knew it, feel the truth as he felt it, enjoy the truth as he enjoyed it. That is the secret of evangelisation. Tell me to go and propagate a community, a sect, a denomination, and I may probably tire on the road. There are inspirations that will last but for a period of days. Let me on the other hand feel in my heart that men are dying for want of the gospel of Christ, let me feel what it is to enjoy the grace of Christ in my own heart, let me really feel that Christ can be one with me, in purpose and sympathy and desire, and then the rest will come.

No words suggest themselves to me sharp enough, terrible enough, with which to condemn and blast the sophism which is being taught by some men to-day, namely, that if we could offer more money, more young men would come forward and offer themselves to the service of the Son of God. I can find no words that will enable me to smite that awful blasphemy as it ought to be struck. We hear it from our Christian platforms that if our churches could offer larger incomes we should have what is called a better class of young men coming forward to give themselves to

the ministry. God forbid ! God's own damnation fall upon any man who touches this ministry that he may live by it. That is how the poor church is being divested, impoverished, depleted, ruined —a young man considering whether he will take this sum of money to preach Christ or that sum of money to follow a commercial pursuit—debating or betraying. If he would turn to the pulpit, my prayer would be that God might strike him dumb on the road, and blind and deaf, and lay his hand upon him like a burden. A man must say, “ Woe is me if I preach not the gospel, necessity is laid upon me to preach the gospel,” but we are *making* ministers now, tempting them, encouraging them to come forward. Let a man be *driven* forward, *thrust* out, *impelled*. It is not permitted to us to boast or to glorify *oneself*, but it is permitted to a man to glorify *God* in any impulse which may have driven him forward to this work.

## LXXXIII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we are here still, even in thine house, and in the most holy place upon the earth, even the sanctuary of God, because of thy tender mercy and thy lovingkindness towards us. This is the crown and the sum thereof : thou hast no other love to show us here and now, than in the house and in the cross of thy Son Jesus Christ. This is the very sun of thy glory, the full outshining of thy grace and wisdom, and no other light can we now have than that which is the grace of Christ Jesus. We stand in that grace, it is our comfort, our strength, our one hope : without it our life has no light, no music, no outlook—with it we have new Heavens and a new earth ; every day and every breath we draw is a promise that we shall soon see the broader revelation.

Thou hast brought us up out of the valley of the week and set out feet upon a high hill, where the wind is pure, and whence we see all the blueness of the summer sky, and hear voices that are not heard in other places. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven : the angels are not far away, and the harpers harping with their harps are just behind the translucent cloud. We have come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, written in heaven : to-day our aspirations are realised in a great gladness, we see the invisible, we touch the impalpable, we are close to God : behold here we see the shining of thy garments, as thou dost stand backward towards us, for now could we not bear the intolerable shining of thy face. Make thy goodness pass before us, and that will be pledge enough that thy glory will follow. May we see thee in every blooming flower, hear thee in every trill that makes the woods alive, and feel thee near in every tender perfume of the garden. Give us a great conception of thyself, deliver us from all narrow views, and all superficial interpretations, save us from the poverty and the bondage of the mean letter, and lead us into the freedom of intelligent sympathy and the possession of glowing love.

We bless thee for thy word—so grand, so tender, broad as a firmament and yet particular as a shining star, having a message to each heart, a special blessing for each needy life. We bless thee for the cross, that up-gathering and expression of the principle of sacrifice which is part of this wondrous scheme of thine, which is known by every root that brings forth its stem and blossom, and felt by every heart, but realised in all the glory of its meaning only in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of

ine world. Help us to live in his Spirit, to realise and enjoy with unutterable gladness all the meaning and purpose of the shedding of his blood. When the tempter would drag us down, may we answer him with the lightning of the cross, and find our security in the wounded Son of God : he loved us, he gave himself for us, he spared not the blood of his heart, and we need it all.

Let thy merciful visitation of us this morning be felt by every heart, so that there may be no exclusion from thy blessing. May the hospitality of thine house offer itself to the poorest and meanest of us, to the man whose face is an anxiety and whose heart is a bitter torment to itself. Speak great hospitable words to the prodigal returned, tell him that there is no robe in thine house too good for his wearing. Kiss every little child, bless every one who is weary and ill at ease, deliver from perplexity the soul whose embarrassments are too vexatious, and send light upon lives that have dipped down into great caverns of darkness. Lift us all above our fears, enable us to set our feet upon the neck of our spiritual enemies, and may we to-day enter, not only into the serenity, but into the triumph of faith.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. We listen for the rolling of thy chariot wheels—delay not on the road : thy whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, for thy coming. O bridegroom of the earth, come : Saviour of the world, tarry not long behind—we are lost and weary and sick and bruised : we shall die presently if thou dost not come. But thou wilt not deny the voice of thine earth, thou wilt surely reply to her sighing, and there shall yet be gladness where there has been much woe. Amen.

### **Matthew xxiv. 1-41.**

1. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple : and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.
2. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things ? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming (thy presence), and of the end of the world (the age) ?
4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.
5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am (the) Christ ; and shall deceive (seduce) many.
6. And ye shall hear (be about to hear) of wars and rumours of wars : see that ye be not troubled : for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom :

and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you : and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12. And because iniquity (lawlessness) shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world (Roman empire) for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come.

15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand :)

16. Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains :

17. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house :

18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes (his cloak).

19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !

20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day :

21. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

23. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there ; believe it not.

24. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25. Behold, I have told you before.

26. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert ; go not forth : behold he is in the secret chambers : believe it not.

27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken :

30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and

then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32. Now learn a parable of the fig tree ; Where his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh :

33. So likewise ye (the pronoun is emphatic), when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

37. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40. Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41. Two women shall be grinding at the mill (the lowest form of female labour) ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

## THE EXCITING ELEMENT IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

**I**MAGINE a river very broad and deep, rolling quietly and rhythmically for long miles, not a bubble upon the surface, no noise, no tumult, a great, deep, strong, noble stream of water, and imagine that stream suddenly coming to a terrific precipice. What a cataract, what a roar and rush and tumult, what rainbows made by the sun, what snowy veils and screens, what infinite wizardry of shape and sound and suggestion ! It does not look like the same water. Nothing is so accommodating as water ; it will do anything, it will allow itself to be broken up into little drops that shall sparkle like diamonds in the shining sun, and gather itself into great masses and carry navies as if they were straws driven by the wind. It will run through gardens, it will come into houses dripping and dropping just to suit the capacity of your little

cup ; it will gather itself into infinite blackness in the heavens, and fall in daily baptism upon the thirsty earth. There is nothing so genial, yet so terrible, as water—unless, indeed, to be its mate and contrast, fire.

It is even so with these speeches of Christ. Up to within a few chapters of the portion we have now read, the stream of his talk has rolled forward in infinite calmness and nobleness, having no end of suppressed power in it—but just recently it has come over a terrific precipice of rocks, and it has been rolling and dashing amongst us like a fierce cataract, so that some of us have hardly been able to recognise the grand, massive, eloquent Speaker, in the recent turmoil and rush of his enthusiasm, passion, and eager, burning consecration. Yet the Speaker is one and the same, master of all styles. Never man spake like this Man. No prophet could forecast his tone, or tell with certainty what course he would take in any argument, or what answer he would make to any temptation. We are now amongst the parables of judgment, and are standing in what may be termed the very sanctuary of destruction and sacrifice.

At this moment the idea of *destruction* is uppermost in the Saviour's mind. The explanation is that his own soul was sorrowful even unto death. When a man's *soul* is sorrowful, there is nothing being built up *outside* of it. The universe takes its hue and tone and meaning from the inner experience and consciousness of the observer. The cross is already shouldered, the nails are already half in the quivering hands, the blood is already beginning to trickle down the anxious face. So all things are dying around him : the temple is trembling, the heavens are gathering themselves up into a last agony, the old earth is pained at her heart and will presently give way.

How exquisite was the correspondence between the inner and the outer in the life of Christ ! He saw things with his heart. When he nestled in his Father's bosom and felt all the serenity of that divine warmth, he said, “ Consider the lilies how they grow : they toil not, they spin not ; yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” That was his view of nature and of life, as he laid his hand upon his Father's heart. When he felt his Father's arms strongly and warmly

around him he said, “ Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” and the embrace was closer and closer between the Father and the Son. Now that Calvary is in front, Golgotha, the place of skulls and bones, preceded by Gethsemane and all that Gethsemane means—even the temple, marble and gold, the choicest thing of its kind in all the earth, is reeling and trembling and will presently fall flat down, a mass and heap of shapeless stones, as if struck by every wind of heaven. True Man, real Heart, grand Soul, what wonder that he spake lightning to the hypocrites, and tore the visors from their face with a ruthless energy ? They were so unlike himself : he fought them as men would fight beasts, or ghosts, or things that make the life afraid.

And the disciples come in once more, with their usual good purpose, and with their usual feebleness. Worn and sad of heart, his life a great agony, every look a pain, every pulsation a dying, he was walking away from the temple, and his disciples, well-meaning little children, really soft of heart and good-willed, came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. They thought it would strike his mind—as in the case of our social sorrows. They would show him something, they would try to lure him from his brooding thought that had so much blood in it. Perhaps if they talked to him, he would forget his woe awhile. So like children that would show their toys to a boy distressed, they would show him the beautiful temple, they must touch its stones with a trembling reverence, and thus seek to charm him from his grief. He heard what they had to say, and said, “ Ye see these things ? ” “ Yea, Lord.” “ There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Do not comfort me with things that perish : do not meet an infinite agony of the heart with things that have the writing of condemnation upon their very faces. Your meaning is good, but the comfort you offer me is itself short-lived ; yea, presently a great sharp wind will blow through all this temple fabric, and no two stones piled upon each other shall anywhere be found.”

Silence ensues. Jesus went to the mount of Olives, and when he was quiet a little, the disciples came to him to continue the conversation which he had suddenly introduced. “ Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming,

and of the end of the world?" Curious yet. Not struck by what was going to happen immediately in the way of humiliation and death, always forgetting the cross, always forgetting the only things they ought to have remembered, persistently throwing the mind forward to glories and kingdoms and princedoms and masterships of various degree and name. He could not bind them down to the only thing he came to exemplify and glorify—the principle of self-sacrifice. Yet he answers them now with a thunderstorm. Yet amid all that thunderstorm there are streaks of blue sky, outlooks upon silent and beautiful places that may be temple gates or the beginnings of infinite sanctuaries. Never was such a speech delivered by mortal lips, its thunder, its silence, its infinite energy, its instruction which might have been whispered in the ear of trouble. It was his own speech in very deed, both in its intellectual capacity, in its moral tone, in its subtle simplicity, in its grand grasp of past, present, and future, in all that was awful in grandeur and all that was luring and tender in heaven's own beauty.

What is the subject? The *coming* of Christ. *How* will he come—*when* shall these things be—what shall be the *sign* of thy coming? "Tell us," said the eager disciples, "something about it, that thou hast not yet spoken to any human ear." They gather closely around him: emphatically they came to him privately, and they clustered around him—they would almost have crushed him in their eager love and in the straining of their attention to hear every tone and whisper of that voice. "Tell us."

How could he refuse? Twelve children overgrown, twelve faithful yet fickle men, twelve hearts that had done all they could for him—it was indeed but little, still it was not underestimated by his all-appreciating love. Now surely they will draw from him all that is in his heart. How can he refuse? We have seen him shake off deputations of other kinds, notably the people who came about the tribute money, the Sadducees who came with a question about the resurrection, others who came tempting him—he so spake to them that they never came back again. The burnt child dreads the fire. But now these are his own twelve, and they want to know all about it, and the place is propitious and convenient—the mount of Olives, nobody there but themselves—why should not the whole thirteen of them carry the same secret? Yet

he tells them much, and keeps back the thing they wanted to know, yea, in the very midst of his speech he saith, "No man knoweth the hour, no, not even I." How he could know and not know, be and not be, contradict himself with violence and yet be the same, infinite in self-coherence and in self-harmony—fools can never understand it, only those who are elected, called, sanctified can enter into that mystery. He is going to tell us, but he will not. He makes a great speech and leaves us in utter ignorance of the one thing we desire to know. Yet he speaks the one word which it is only needful for a man to heed to be truly wise. "Watch." The *watcher* wins, the watcher reads, the watcher sees the coming day. Watch! We have seen men watch for the sun rising from the point of the Righi—all were looking in one direction, nobody looking elsewhere—the sigh, the joy, the tears, the religious silence. So says the Son of man, "You want to see me coming, to rejoice in my cloudless light, to behold the beauty of my kingdom—*Watch*." Let us regard this coming of Christ in any light—coming into the *individual* heart, coming among the *nations* of the earth, coming in the pomp and glory of His power and sovereignty. Regard the coming of Christ in *any* and *every* sense, and let us see what we can learn from this eloquent exposition of the case.

Do we not learn first of all that the coming of Christ makes itself *felt through all the space of life*? When he moves, he stirs the universe. He cannot come or go as if nothing had happened. He was before all things, and by him all things consist, and in him all things are made. The clouds are the trailing of his garments, and on the wings of the wind he flies. What wonder then that when he comes there shall be stir, tumult, agitating, shaking, a pulsing through and through the whole life and economy of things? Behold his deity in this very action. The *earth* would be extinguished in its little cloud, and the nearest star would not know that the spark had gone out—so says the astronomer. But when the *sun*, at which all lamps are lighted, withdraws, the universe is enwrapped in impenetrable and intolerable night. Jesus Christ is the centre of all things, his life touches every point and tests every interest. Christ cannot easily and quietly settle into a corrupt scheme and become, so to say, part and parcel of it. Whenever he moves, creation vibrates to his step. When he came

into the world Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled. Inquiry, inquest, search, fear, curiosity, anticipation, hope, gladness—all these conflicting emotions and ministries were set to work immediately : when he comes into the individual heart, old habits protest, old appetites cry out, the whole heaven and earth of the personal life are shaken, and they tremble under the tread of his coming.

Do we not also learn that the coming of Christ seems in its *process* to contradict its *result*? What harmony is there between a Christ that shall pacify all things and bring in sweet peace to reign as universal queen and all this tumult—wars, rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and these are but the beginning of sorrows? Is there any relation between such phenomena and the incoming of profound and universal and eternal *peace*? The devil dies hard always. The devil has made up his mind not to quit us *easily*; he will have the last pull. Remember the miracle in which Jesus Christ ordered the devil out of the sufferer, and the devil tore him and came out of him, but not without a final struggle, not without one more assault, not without upgathering his whole energy and seeking to kill him in the very act of leaving him. So it must be in the *individual heart*, in the *national conscience*, in the universal aspiration and feeling. Whenever Christ comes he comes by processes that seem to contradict the very idea of his coming.

Is this your experience? Be not afraid, be not cast down by a great fear and sorrow, lest Jesus Christ be not coming to you at all. Say you, “ I am only fighting, struggling, praying without an answer, knocking at a door that will not open, but I am still knocking—can this be right? I have doubts, anxieties, tumults, that I dare not put into words,”—is that your speech? It reads as if part of this mightier eloquence—“ Nation shall rise against nation—famines, pestilences, earthquakes, desolations, abominations, great tribulations.” Your little cross is cut out of this infinite tree on which is hanging the Son of God. Let no man’s heart therefore fail him because he is now only in the tribulational period of this progress. The Son of God is *coming*, though at present it seems as if the Son of God had *forsaken* the universe.

Nothing happens in all this tumult that was not *foreseen*. In the twenty-fifth verse Jesus Christ says, “ Behold, I have told you

before." There are no *surprises* to Omniscience : nothing happens by accident in all the machinery and economy of the universe. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. There are no accidents, in any lawless and incoherent sense of the term. All things work together for good to them that love God. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials, because out of the working of these trials shall come a complete and final peace. What knowledge of human nature is here revealed on the part of the Son of God. He knows the course of truth in the world, he knows precisely what every man will feel, how certain interests will be shocked, how evil habitudes must be displaced by violence, and how at the last there will be a fight between evil and good, devil and God, that shall seem to wreck the universe. God knows the whole scene down to Armageddon's bloody field—it is before the Divine vision : not a soul in all the holy army shall be lost, but when the night falls on the ghastly field, only *evil* shall be wounded and smitten with death. Hope on, live in watchfulness —'tis not ours to lead, but quietly and loyally to follow.

Now in view of these marvellous circumstances, the inquiry becomes very natural—*Why* should the incoming of the Son of God be accompanied by commotion and tumult so tremendous? Why not come like a dawning day, why not like the springing corn or the budding flower? He *does* come exactly like these very things you have named. Like break of day—know ye what that means in the *jungles* where beasts congregate and vermin swarm in countless multitudes? Know ye that the shining of the sun upon some places is like a shower of darts? How the forsaken holes are sought by the wandering vermin, how eyes not made for much light flee away from the broadening day as from an enemy that will kill and spare not? And the springing corn—do not talk lightly about the springing corn as though it were all *ease*. Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. The springing corn is a springing out of corruption, life out of death, the mystery of germination, the central mystery of material things. The springing corn—how that sharp spike pierces the dust and comes up into the light, and how *quietly* it grows, say you? So it does, but to what *end* does it grow? See how the blade grows up into the ear, and how the full corn grows in the ear, and how the golden head is bent again towards the dust out of which it came,

and how it stands there like a doomed sacrifice awaiting the priest's knife that shall cut it down and grind it between the upper and the neither millstone, and burn it with fire, and *then* give the world its bread. Is there no tumult, is there no pain, is there no agony there? He *does* come as break of day and as springing corn.

And think ye that the *dust of the earth* has no history of sorrow and smiting and wounding and great pain? How is the dust formed? By terrible revolutions, by shattering rains, by powdering winds: the dust is, so to say, the sweat of the very rocks, the dust itself is the result of smiting, grinding, pulverising by processes which, if the earth had been sensitive, would have meant sorrow, pain, bitterness, Golgotha, Calvary. The whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.

And the spring comes through *difficulty*: the winter will hardly let it come, the great winter that you thought had gone, comes up ten days after the spring has had possession and says, "Retire," blows upon the green young thing great breaths of ice, and sometimes it seems as if the spring must go away and never come again. Dear spring, sweet child, vernal beauty, truly thou hast a great fight to fight to get thy hold upon the earth. Spring wrestles with winter, fights him bravely, will have her way, and "flings a primrose on the bank in pledge of victory."

So Christ will come. Let no man attempt to define the advent of Christ. Let it take upon itself the smallest or the largest meaning—it will always imply shaking, distress, war, desolation, movement of the most terrific kind; but over it all, under it all, round about it all, is the sweet promise that the whole earth shall be the garden of God, the old, old earth shall have the best robe flung around its shoulders, and like a returned prodigal shall be set in its Father's house to go out no more for ever. We are part of the earth, and every man of us shall be saved—not a soul amongst us shall be lost. Hope on, fight on, pray on, and even thou, poor wanderer, miserable self-tormentor, shut up with devils at night and fighting invisible foes all day—even *thou* shalt be on the right side of the door when the door is shut.

## LXXXIV.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art always coming : behold Jesus Christ is born amongst us every day, every night the shepherds sing and hear the song of the angels, and are filled with great joy because the delivering life has come into the world. May Christ be born in us the hope of glory, and may he come to us with the light of every morning, and shine upon us all the night long through every star. Enable us always to hear the footfall of thy coming, that we may always watch and be ready, and be found amongst those servants who are blessed because of their industry and vigilance.

Enable us to know the uncertainty of our life as we surely know the littleness of its span. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we know how to reckon our days well, with all soberness and accuracy, that we be not found amongst those fools who suppose they can never die. Enable us by the ministry of thy Holy Spirit, ever indwelling and ever working within us, to see life as it is, in its simplicity and mystery, in its immediate duty and its far-off anticipations, in its tragedy of sin, in its need of divine help, and enable us, having seen all this, to avail ourselves of divine answers to the whole necessity, and to live in thy truth and walk in the light of thy revelation. Teach us that greatest of all lessons, self-renunciation, utter, complete, joyous, triumphant trust in God.

In thee we would live and move and have our being, not only by the necessity of nature, but by the compulsion and sweet constraint of sympathy and love. We have undertaken for ourselves, and behold a great failure is the result. We cannot touch the inner wound, we cannot heal the disease which consumes our life, but there is balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there, there is One who is mighty to save, Jesus Christ of God, Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Prince of peace, known to us by many names expressing one love, and completing one grand capacity to deliver. We bless thee for Jesus Christ : we needed his name for our names are poor without it ; we needed his presence as flowers need the sun. Thou hast not withheld him : by a great shining of love he fills the whole sky, and by infinite tenderness of grace, he re-lights the lamp of our hope day by day, so that we can look beyond death and the grave and all things terrible and feast our vision on the Paradise of God. Whilst we are here, make us quick to know thee well, clear-sighted that

we may see the inner meaning of thy word, and conscientious, that with all faithfulness of purpose and service we may do the immediate duty, and find in it a great reward.

We commend one another tenderly to thy care. We find no fault with one another, for when we stand in thy presence, we are all guilty before God, but we pray for one another with all the desire and simplicity of eager love, that every one may have a blessing all his own, that there may fall upon us a common benediction, impartial as the glory which lights every corner of the earth. Pity our littlenesses : in the day of our feebleness and humiliation look not upon us with the scorn we cannot bear. Pardon our sin : when it is greatest, thy love is greatest : where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. Thou wilt have the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, and thy blood shall take away the sin of the whole world. This is our joy, this our hope, and out of this glad prospect do we draw every song that our heart would sing.

O Living One, cause death itself to die ; O thou in whose heart there is no purpose but of love to the children of men, drive out of our hearts all anger, wrath, bitterness, clamour, and selfishness, and make our spirits sanctuaries of thine own presence.

We commend unto thy tender love all for whom we ought to pray—the old, who will soon become young again ; the young, who know nothing of the mystery and sadness of the world into which they have come ; the poor, to whom it is a hardship to live ; the rich, who have the responsibility of wealth ; the wayward and the wandering, the prodigal, who seems as if unable to come home again, the hard heart that even our love cannot soften. We pray for the sick and those that are ill at ease, for all who are housed in our hospitals and are there receiving the ministrations of science and Christian charity. We pray that thou wouldest make their bed in their affliction, comfort them in their manifold sorrows, and sanctify unto them every visitation of thy purpose. Prosper thou all wise and learned men who are searching into the causes and the remedies of disease ; let a great light shine upon them in all their inquiries, and may the time come when disease shall be unknown because sin is no longer in the world.

The Lord give us this day sweet messages from Heaven : may we hear great voices, like rushing, "mighty winds, and tender voices, the very whispers of God's own love, so that according to our necessity all the revelation of Heaven may be adjusted. Make every preacher of the gospel to-day as a flame of fire, anoint him with an unction from the Holy One, and make the Christian pulpit this day vindicate itself as the supreme institution of the world for the education and inspiration and ennoblement of the human mind. To this end do thou make even our weakness a cause of strength, and make all thy preachers but instruments on which thou wilt discourse the music of the eternal decrees and the infinite love. Amen.

**Matthew xxiv. 42-51.**

42. Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44. Therefore be ye also ready : for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season ?

46. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ;

49. And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken ;

50. The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**THE TWO FUTURES.**

YOU know that he *will* come, you do not know at what precise *hour* he will appear. The future is known, yet *unknown*. Consider what the future *is*. It touches the uttermost bound of time. If one might perpetrate a contradiction in terms, it is the horizon of eternity, the furthest away point in a line which has no limits. We are obliged thus to talk in self-contradictory speech when we would represent the great and grand things of creation. Number has to be set aside or talked of in terms that appear to be confusing, as the Three are One, and the One is Three.

There are *two* futures. This is a fact which is so often forgotten in the reasoning of men. There is a *grand* future, and a *little* one ; the great future in which *Imagination* holds court, the future of fancy and speculation, the unmapped land of dream and fancy and vision, where life is to be a miracle, and every day a keen surprise. That is the future which the poets have taken under their care, that is the future whose firmament they have punctuated with

radiant stars ; but there is a *little* future in which Imagination has been supplanted by *Anxiety*, the future that is just about to dawn, the near To-morrow, the Presently that makes weak men restless and strong men quiet in hopefulness.

With these two futures we are well acquainted. The danger is that we confuse them in our view and reasoning, and should thus be talking about two totally different things in one and the same way. We have a future which we consign to Imagination : we have another future which we hand over to Anxiety, and anxiety often beats imagination, gets a firmer grip of some men than Imagination can ever get ; men who take thought for *to-morrow* may take no thought for *eternity* : anxiety bars and limits and bounds them with prison boundaries and forces. Their anxiety is greater than their imagination because their *selfishness* is greater than their *religion*. Herein it is that so many persons get wrong.

So we have two futures, the near and the distant, the future in which Anxiety plays its vexatious and harassing part, and the great future where Imagination revels and poetises and dreams ; and my difficulty, as a religious teacher, is this, that my scholars or pupils will so give way to little carking mean anxiety as to leave no space or time or opportunity for the consideration of that grand future which must come and bring with it all that we mean by the sweet pure name of Heaven.

Let us see how Jesus Christ himself treated the question of the future. His action in relation to it was varied yet consistent, and, as usual, was authoritatively instructive. In the first place Jesus Christ used the future as *a source of inspiration*, but it was not the little future of to-morrow, it was the great future of all time unborn that he so used ; he often spoke of the Grand Future. “ Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened,” said he. “ What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.” “ I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” “ Fear not, little flock : it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” “ He that endureth unto the end shall be saved.” “ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” You do not wonder that a man who could project himself thus infinitely across the ages, should say, from the point of his final projection, “ Take no thought for the morrow, do not be the victims of anxiety ; have a future, but let it be a grand one, apoca-

lyptic in its possibility and colour and form and tone, worthy of the mind that dreams it ; and do not be the victims of anxiety and petty care and carking vexation.” He provided for that particular element, so to say, of the human mind, which must take hold of the future, but as he saw that element rising and asserting itself, he put within its grasp something worthy of its capacity.

The New Testament is full of the same thought. What wonder that Jesus Christ said, “ I am not come to destroy the prophets” ? The world must live in its *prophecies*. To-day is too small a boundary for the soul : one world at a time was not enough for the soldier Alexander—’tis not enough for a man in whom the divinity has come. The prophets lived in the sunny future, so did Christ set his little church under its warm rays, and bless it with the promise that the voice of the turtle should be one day heard above the roar of the storm. Our life is not to be locked up in the narrow prison of one day. Among the riches of the church are not only things present but things to come. These things to come make up the mystery of glory which burns in the apocalypse. A nation is to be born in a day, the enemy of man, the old Abaddon is to be encoiled in chains that cannot be broken, the dead are to be raised incorruptible, death itself shall die, the grave-scars are to be rubbed out of the green earth, sorrow and sighing are to flee away, the whole creation, forgetting its grievous overthrow and its sharp pain, shall stand fast on eternal pillars and be beautiful as a palace built for God.

Nor is this the poetry of speech ; it is the reality of fact. The word poetry is often misunderstood : it is the *blossom of reality*, the uppermost phase and culminating beauty of hard history and stern fact. Tell me—does *he* talk mere poetry, in the sense of talking only that which is visionary and impossible, who takes a root or a seed of a flower and says, “ Out of this shall come strength and shapeliness, bud and blossom and fruit : birds shall sing in its branches and men shall lie down at noon beneath its cool shade—or out of this little seed shall come a flower, an apocalypse in itself, and the bee shall draw honey from its hidden cell”? If we had never *seen* the outcome of root or seed we should say concerning such a man—“ Visionary, poetical, romantic, dreamy, utterly without practical sagacity and arithmetical and measurable aptitude in relation to things of time and sense.” But

the man is no mere poet in the sense of creating universes in words only : rightly judged, the man who so speaks about root or seed is only an *historian* by anticipation ; he is a reasoner, he is the prince of logicians.

In viewing the future, therefore, do not be drawn away by the cry of poetry or romance. He is no visionary who sees in the seed time the prose out of which will come the poetry of harvest. On the other hand *he* would be the loose reasoner who sees seed only in the seed, wood only in the root, and did not see in the seed waving cornfields, and food for the lives of men. There shall be a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof, the *poetry* thereof, shall shake like Lebanon. Was *he* only a word-painter who so spoke ? Credit him with the most penetrating vision and with that grand historical capacity which sees all possibilities in the germ and seed of things.

There is a poetry which is the highest form of *fact*. If a man could have said in England two hundred years ago, that communication with the ends of the earth would one day be a question of mere moments, and that according to the face of the clock men would be talking in New York about something which had happened in London actually before it had taken place, he would have been regarded as the wildest of lunatics, without practical aptitude, one of the dreaming seers that you can make nothing of, a puzzle in providence, the very mystery of Omnipotence. Yet would he not in reality have been the severest of *reasoners*, the most acute and penetrating of *logicians*? We who have no faith discount and discredit the faith of other men. The passionless man can never understand passion, the literalist cannot follow the logic of prophecy, the moral Laplander can never be made to dream of the luxuriant Christian tropics. You cannot be more than you are. But do not therefore say that other men are no more gifted than yourselves. There are men to whom there has been no future in the sense of cloud and mystery and chaos, but to whom the future has given up its secret in many a fore-blessing rain, in many a secret hint, in many a quiet night visit, in many a glowing dream.

Do not let us therefore measure others by ourselves. We have to take our view of the future from Christ, and he regarded the future as an inspiration. It was his sanctuary of retreat : he lived

in it, he projected himself beyond the fevered day, and lived in the calm eternity. We must do the same, or we shall be vexed and stung with details which come and go with the fickle wind. Blessed is the future which is coming upon Christ's church, a day without a threatening cloud, an infinite paradise without one thorn or noxious plant, a home from which no child has wandered, a sweet heaven unvisited by sin and untroubled by pain. Such is the flower which comes out of the Christian seed, and he who foresees and foretells its coming is not a speaker of words but a prophet of facts. Therefore comfort one another with these words. If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. We have reckoned this world at a cheap rate because of the power of an endless life. If there be no endless life, we have done this world an injustice. Our light affliction, therefore, is but for a moment, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. In proportion as we live in heaven are we masters of earth : just as we hide ourselves in the sanctuary of the great future and view all things from Christ's standpoint are we at rest, and amid raging seas and rocking mountains our eyes look upon the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Let us see to it that we follow Christ in this, namely, that we do not live in the little future which is mastered by anxiety, but in the great future, which yields its riches to a reverent imagination.

In the next place, Christ treated the future as *unknown and yet well known*. " Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore be ye also ready : for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Here we have a quantity spoken of that is well known yet unknown, unknown yet well known. Have we any parallel to this in our lower courses of thinking and action ? Most assuredly we have. We know that *to-morrow* will come : tell me what will *to-morrow bring* with it—a sullen face of cloud or a bright countenance of June light, blessing the lands that wait for it with all the benediction of summer ? We know the great fact that *to-morrow* will dawn ; we know not what will be the *incidents* of the day, who shall live, who shall die, what controversies will

be adjusted, what correspondence will turn our thoughts into new directions, and tax our energies with new claims. We know it—we do not know it.

So with the harvest : the harvest will surely come, but will it be good or bad, early or late, satisfying or disappointing ? Will it be well gathered or ill gathered ? The harvest is known, but the *incidents* of its quality and abundance no man can know, with certainty. And *death* will come. When ? Thank God we cannot tell. Who could face his duty, if he knew to a moment when and how he would die ? The *great* future is revealed, the *detailed* future is mercifully kept back. Watch therefore—therefore be ye also ready. That is all.

So then from the parallels or analogies which are supplied by our own life I can understand in part Christ's treatment of the future. The Lord will come : great events will transpire, the trumpet shall sound and the elect shall be gathered together from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. The long-waiting earth shall receive her Lord—*when?* Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. There are some secrets which can be at rest in *only one heart*.

And yet Jesus Christ viewed the future as having *an immediate influence on the present*, therefore he called for vigilance and readiness, and rebuked the men who were so miscalculating the coming of the future that they did injury to their fellow-servants. He had such a knowledge of history that he was enabled to tell his age that in the days of Noah men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came in great blotches of black rain upon the hot streets, and the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled and the whole heaven became a deluge and the wicked were lost. "So," said he, "it will be about this coming of my own. Men will chaffer with one another, hold wordy controversy with one another in points theological and ecclesiastical, and will speak about difficulties which a reverent *heart* could have subdued and dissolved, or be indulging in selfish appetite and desire until the great trumpet sound and the event transpire. Such was his grasp of the future, such his insight into its breadth and narrowness !

We cannot improve though we might enlarge his lesson, when

he condensed his instruction into one word, " Watch." A great expectation warms the heart, a grand dream helps us to bear the burden of the sweltering day, and noble thought ennobles the mind which entertains it. He who has only a wall in front of him is in a prison. He who is bounded by a horizon has an infinite liberty.

Now Christ comes into the region which we term practical, and in that region he says, " Be ready : WATCH : be in the tower : be looking out : at any moment the crisis of creation may supervene." To work in this spirit is to work well.

Jesus Christ was always practical, though oftentimes he said things which seemed to be of a visionary nature. He was practical when he told his church to take care of the poor and to visit the sick and bless the unblest and give joy to him who was sad of heart. Christianity has its own *secularism* as well as its own theology. To hear some persons talk one would imagine that Christianity was only the latest phase of the theological imagination. Christianity has its *humanities* as well as its divinities. There are two commandments in its infinite law, the love of God, the love of man. There is no religion under heaven so hard-working as Christianity : it never rests. Hindooism has its At Home, Mahometanism makes no proselytes, Confucianism lets the world alone, but Christianity *lets nobody alone*. It is the working religion, the missionary religion, the energetic faith, the revolutionary force. Do give Christianity the credit of being the *hardest working* religion known amongst men. I do not mean merely hard-working in any ceremonial sense, but in the largest sense of beneficence, love, evangelisation, caring for everybody, never resting, until the last man is brought in. Not judging by majorities, but judging by individualities ; counting every man one, and reckoning that its work is unfinished till the last man is homed in the very heart of Christ.

Our Christianity is nothing if it be not thus practical. He only is the visionary theologian who is so lost in theological speculation as to neglect the ignorance, the disease, the poverty which are lying round about his very house and path.

*"This Gospel shall be preached for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end be."* "That is the end of Jerusalem, before the destruction whereof the Gospel was preached throughout the world. Witness Paul, saying, Their sound hath gone out into all the earth ; and again, The Gospel is preached to every creature under heaven, so that ye may see it running from Jerusalem into Spain. And if one only apostle, Paul, spread the Gospel so far, what shall we think did all the rest ? And this was a great miracle for the convincing of the unbelieving Jews before their destruction, for the Gospel to be preached in all parts of the world, in twenty or thirty years at the most ; if this would not move them to believe, nothing could."—(CHYSOSTOM). "This must not be understood as done by the apostles, for there are many barbarous nations of Africa amongst whom the Gospel was never yet preached, as we may gather by such as have been captives there. This therefore remaineth yet to be accomplished ; and because it is a secret when the world shall be filled with the Gospel, it is a secret likewise when shall be the day of judgment, before which this must be."—(AUGUSTINE.)

LXXXV.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, in Jesus Christ our Saviour, who alone bore our sins and carried them away, do thou now hear our praise and our prayer. There are no silent hearts in thine house, no mouth is closed in dumbness, we are inspired with a sense of thankfulness, for we have nothing that we have not received, and we are debtors all to the continual mercy of God. We stand in the mercy of Christ, we breathe the love of Christ ; because Christ is our Head and Saviour and Lord, therefore do we appear in thy presence, the living to praise thee. We have no life of our own : we are not our own, we are bought with a price, we are the ransomed of the Lord, we have been delivered by the right hand of his power and the right hand of his grace. Because of the cross of Christ we are what we are, to it we owe our every hope, as from it we draw our only consolation. Root us and ground us in Christ's wisdom and Christ's love, may we be no more children tossed to and fro, but men in understanding, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, wise with the wisdom which cometh down from above.

Deliver us from all false reasoning, from all excuses that are worthless, from every snare that is laid for our feet, and as for the temptations which form part of our daily culture, enable us to answer them every one with the wisdom and grace of Christ. Give us some understanding of ourselves, that we may be no longer fools, but wise, buying up the time, redeeming every opportunity, seizing and magnifying every opening thou dost give to us, into wider liberties and nobler services.

We would love thy word : we would, having found it, eat it, as men who are an hungered eat bread. To the end that we may understand thy word, grant us a continual baptism of the Holy Ghost. All things are plain to him that understandeth—do thou then light the lamp of our understanding, and explain to our soul, the mysteries for which there are no fit words. Rebuke us in gentleness, reproach us not in thine indignation, for who can stand against thee when thou dost awaken to controversy ? Teach us by manifold experience, by gentle ministries, by incidents that convince the understanding, and show the heart the background and the outlook of things. With this wisdom we shall not err : so fortified, we cannot be overthrown. To the Strong for strength we flee—pity our weakness and grant us thy power.

Thou hast set us within a brief lifetime and called upon us to fulfil the obligations of stewardship. The time is so short, the enemy so strong,

the temptations so many—there is but a step between time and eternity. Thou hast set things together in immediate and startling contrast ; we sleep in one world and awake in another : we are close to the invisible state, the dead are not far away, the great Heaven kindly stoops down to us that we may overhear its sweet melody, and the great deep pit opens, that we may see how terrible is the penalty of sin. May we be wise men, faithful stewards, beneficent servants, so that whether thou dost come through the wedding feast or as a Lord having charge of his house, or as the Judge of the nations, we may be ready to meet thee. Blessed are they who have been at the cross, for they can meet thee at the judgment seat.

Comfort us according to the pain of our distress : let our tears plead with thee and let our infirmity be known in heaven as our strongest plea. Thou wilt not crush us, thou wilt not thunder upon us with thy great power, thou wilt not overcome us with the billows of the sea—thou wilt lead us by the brink of a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Amen.

### **Matthew xxv.**

1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps (torches), and went forth to meet the bridegroom.
2. And five of them were wise (prudent), and five were foolish.
3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :
4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.
6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh : go ye out to meet him.
7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.
8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out (going out).
9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.
10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door was shut.
11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.
12. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.
13. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.
14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.
15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one ; to every man according to his several ability : and straightway took his journey.

16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded (wrought, or was busy) with the same, and made them other five talents.

17. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler (the word ruler is not in the Greek) over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

26. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers (bankers), and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury (interest).

28. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32. And before him shall be gathered all nations (all the Gentiles): and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye

blessed of my Father (who *belong* to my Father), inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :

35. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :

36. Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me (cared for ; from the same root as Episcopas) : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ?

38. When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ?

39. Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ?

40. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels :

42. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink :

43. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ?

45. Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

### THE PARABLE OF JUDGMENT.

**I**N this chapter the parables of judgment come to their natural and vivid conclusion. The twenty-fifth chapter is the twenty-fourth chapter in a new form. The twenty-fourth chapter is hardly in the style of the New Testament : it might be taken from Ezekiel or Daniel so far as many of its figures and prophecies are concerned. Wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, famines and pestilences and earthquakes—surely these are words which belong to the old prophets rather than to the gentle Prince of peace. Tribulation, darkening of the sun, the moon withholding her light, the stars falling from Heaven, the powers of the heavens shaken, and all the tribes of

the earth mourning in unutterable distress, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory, the angels trumpeting from the sky, and gathering the elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other—this is more like the sonorous eloquence of the ancient prophets than the speech of him who did not lift up his voice nor cause it to be heard in the streets. But we have surely come to another tone in this Man's voice ; he has grown intenser lately. He began softly, with healings and beatitudes and gentlest speeches, such as might fall upon waiting and distressful hearts with infinite consolation, but latterly he has been speaking much of judgment and of wrath to come and of the final Heavens. We have seen a meaning in all this. As he neared the cross, he seemed also to near the judgment seat.

In the twenty-fifth chapter we come back more to the earlier style. The great thunder-storm has darkened and passed away in infinite shocks and terrible apocalyptic visions and threatenings. Now see how blue the sky is right overhead, and how exquisitely dappled all the clouds that gather around the horizon, and hear how the birds sing, and dear, placid, radiant summer seems to be all round about our life. Yet quickly again clouds gloom the Heavens, and trumpetings are heard, but farther off, and even now the great judgment seat is planted, and the heathen are gathered from all Gentile lands to be sent upward or downward, according to their spirit.

The chapter is really but one subject. The parables are three, the subject is one. In all the three forms of this truth you find that Christ recognizes in human life only two classes. He has not changed his estimate of human society since he delivered his sermon on the mount. In concluding and applying that most marvellous of all speeches, he had but the two classes before him which he names in the first parable in this chapter—the wise and the foolish. Mark the consistency of his view. Though he has been speaking these many months and looking at society from a variety of standpoints, yet he has not changed the distribution of classes which he recognized in the very first of his great and elaborate discourses. When he concluded he said, “ They that hear these sayings of mine and do them, shall be wise, and they that hear these sayings of mine and do them not, shall be foolish.”

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And in this, one of his latest parables, he describes the ten virgins as being equally divided into precisely the same classes, ranged under the leadership of wisdom on the one hand, and folly on the other. And so in regard to these servants who had delivered unto them their Lord's goods, there were but two classes, the careful and the unprofitable, the slothful and the productive ; and in the final parable, in which Gentile nations are called around his throne and separated into right hand and left hand classes, there is no third quantity, no shading off into this or that more striking colour.

This makes our own standard of criticism very clear. Where are we—wise or foolish, profitable or unprofitable, beneficent or selfish ? The metaphysician cannot trouble us here, we are not now in the region of hard, difficult words, we are face to face with the great problem of real character. Let every man judge himself. And in the whole of this judgment you will observe a principle which we ourselves cannot but acknowledge to be right. There is no new principle of judgment introduced here, nothing that shocks our moral consciousness—the voice of the judge in every one of those cases is a voice which takes up and rounds into completeness the voice of every honest heart, the whole world over. You cannot construct Heaven out of doubtful materials. You may constitute an experimental society, an empirical attempt to do things in some other way than they have ever been done before ; but a Heaven never can be built out of materials of uncertainty and doubtfulness, and that have about them all the unreliableness of unascertained qualities and forces.

As business men, gather yourselves around these parables, and tell me if you have not here the simplest and strongest justice. How would you do under the same circumstances ? Take the instance of the unprofitable servant—to what was the reward in the case of those who had profited by their stewardship ? It was given to industry, to faithfulness, to an honest attempt to make the best of life. If the men who had five talents and two talents respectively had said, “ We have worked night and day over this business and it has come to nothing,” their Heaven would have been just as sure as it was when they doubled the original dowry. If any man can say to Christ at the last, “ I have done my best, I have bought up the opportunities, I have endeavoured, with an

honest heart, to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, and behold the upshot of it is that I seem to be weaker now than I was at first—Lord, what shall I do?" to such a speech Christ has but one answer.

Do not take undue encouragement from that suggestion, because the speech itself is founded upon an impossibility. No man can do his best in the gospel sense of the term, and under evangelical conditions, without his exertions ending in honourable issues. This is not a speculation, this is not a tossing of the dice, all of which may come down blank ; this is not throwing seed upon barren ground that has in itself no force of germination or possibility of productiveness. In this region everything tells : the out-putting of a hand may be a battle won, the purpose of an honest heart to make two grass blades grow where only one grew before, to lessen the sum total of human distress, to mitigate the burden which crushes human life, is itself an inspiration from God and the very beginning of Heaven. Do not, therefore, let us take too gloomy a view of the situation in which we are placed. This is a soil that must grow according to that which is put into it. In the morning sow thy seed, in the evening withhold not thine hand, and Heaven shall be the blessed and final issue of the effort.

And the unprofitable servant, was he not treated according to what we believe to be honest and sound principles? Is not this the very law of your family? Without it could society hold together in solid continuity and useful combination for one day? Jesus Christ showed the man how he might have done the best with his talent even in the event of his view being true. There is always an alternative from unproductiveness : it is not either productiveness along one line or non-productiveness along another. Jesus said to him in effect, " You could not work as those two other servants have worked independently individually, with high resoluteness of will and determination to make the best of things —you ought therefore to have worked in co-operation with other people. You could not go forth and work independently and alone, with heroic courage and indestructible chivalry, being all day long sustained by hopes the world could neither see nor measure—you ought therefore to have joined some community of men, you ought to have been a partaker in some organized scheme of Christian benevolence. You could not go out and be a mis-

sionary in the far-away heathenism—you ought, therefore, to have given what I gave you to the church, to the collection made in the church, that so your money might have been turned to the highest advantage. That was the right thing : it might have been you were called to be a missionary, but seeing you could not do that, you ought to have put my money to the bankers, who were collecting the money, and making the best use of it. If you could not be a worker by yourself you could be part of a larger whole.

Christ will not have slothfulness nor unproductiveness. He will not have the benefits and conditions of heaven wasted and perverted. “Thou oughtest to have given my money to the bankers, to them who sat at the *bancum* or bench, and who took it and used it and returned the interest which they realized in the commercial use of it.” So in the great church. Some men cannot lead it, some men cannot stand alone : they are weak when they are left to themselves—they ought therefore to join the community, to be part of a great confederation, to work together, if they have not the faculty of making an individual signature, and an individual mark in the world’s progress.

And now we have in those three parables three different ways of stating the same truth. It is in forgetfulness of this fact that so many critics get wrong. Unless they see the same form of words, they cannot realise the fact that the very selfsame thing is meant. They say that Mark and John do not agree in their answer to a particular question of the most vital kind. I deny it. You say that you do not find in Matthew what you find in Luke with regard to certain high directions as to the culture of life and its destiny. I, for one, have not met with any contrariety of teaching upon any vital question with which the New Testament concerns itself. I have seen that in the teaching of Christ there is no searching of his understanding, he fainteth not, neither is weary, to him it is as breathing to speak new parables, and as but the utterance of a word to set the kingdom of Heaven in different angles, so that it may throw from its ever-varying face different light and colours. But a careful search into these three parables will show us that we have precisely the same principles expressed in three very different forms. Truth must be so expressed because of the variety of mental constitution with which it has to deal. One of the parables does not belong to you, but the other may. With

the first two you may seem to have little or no concern, but in the last you find yourself enclosed as in a circle that cannot be broken. And contrariwise you seem to have no part in the one or in the other, but in the remaining one you find your judgment and your destiny. The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding-feast—hearts of a certain kind respond to the very tone in which the feast is announced. They love hospitality and the music of welcome and the excitement of preparation and the outlook of high festival and continual delight. Others are of a sterner type of mind. The kingdom of heaven is a man travelling into a far country who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods—there the particular mind which they represent is arrested, it would consider the course taken by the man and by the servants, it would enter with singular zest and real concern into the unwinding of the whole economy.

Others are of a still higher imagination, who can only be touched from remote distances and caught in vast schemes and propositions—here is something that will happen, when the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him—and when they gather to watch the issue of the event they are humbled and rebuked ; the imagination which was aglow at the beginning is abased at the end, for they find that he is going to settle destiny, not upon high poetical and imaginative principles, but on the giving and withholding bread and water from the hungry and the thirsty.

Thus at every point he is Lord. Whatever the parable, he brings it to the same solid issue : he vexes and torments the very imagination which he inspires, and yet at the last he leads all minds into deep and complete rest. The Lord deals with men according to their peculiarities : one man is very rich, and he would enter into the kingdom of heaven, and he is told to unburden himself of all his worldly goods. And one standing by and overhearing the direction says that Jesus Christ did not tell that man he must be born again. Did he not ? He put that speech into the only words that particular kind of man could understand. The world is not made up of philosophical Nicodemuses, who can understand metaphysical and occult expressions : he must change his language and his oratory according to the man who hears. To the young man he said, “ Sell all and give to the poor.” He

could have understood no other speech. And the Christ who said to Nicodemus, " Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," did not say that to some other man who applied to him, to the lawyer, for example, who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life—no, because every man is answered according to his own peculiar constitution, temperament, education, circumstances, and yet the answer is one and the same, through and through, from beginning to end, and that can only be ascertained and realised not by argument and by the bandying of words that come into sharp collision one with another, but by deep spiritual experience. There are many roads to the same end, there are many ways winding up to the mountain top—let each man see that he is on the way he can travel best, and make the most of, and get along the quickest, and then at the top you will see men coming up from all sides of the mountain, and at the top forming themselves into one unanimous, harmonious, grateful assembly, with one song and one acclaim to him who made the mountain and all the ways which lead to its sunny and salubrious summit. Do let us understand that there is unity in variety and variety in unity, and that the simple light is most complex.

How does the gospel then present itself to your mind—as a wedding feast? Be ready for the Bridegroom when he comes. The only fact that you are entrusted with is the fact that he is coming : when he will come no man can foretell. And does the gospel strike some other of you as a stewardship, is life a great responsibility to you, is your daily question how to make the most of life? Here is a parable which exactly represents your style of thinking and your plan and purpose of activity. What think ye of this parable? The Lord searches into the conduct of his stewards, he wants to know what every man has been doing, he allows every man quietly to make his own speech, he does not read off the conduct of men as if he were reading a book ; he simply allows every man to tell his own tale. " Which tale shall I tell ?" should be every man's urgent and daily question. Am I working hard, am I endeavouring to double my talents, am I making a good use of my opportunities—or am I taking life upon a narrow and selfish basis, do I suppose that to do nothing and to know nothing will lead at last to some kind of intermediate heaven? That sophism is broken with the lightning of God : it

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cannot be tolerated in the sanctuary : the know-nothing, the do-nothing, and the be-nothing scheme of life can only end in outer darkness and in ineffable distress.

It is right that it should be so. Who could live in any spirit of honesty and hopefulness, if he knew that in the outcome of all things it would be the same whether he had slept all the time or worked all the time, whether he had been economical of all opportunities, and thrifty, or whether he had been selfish, negligent, slothful, doing nothing to make the world better and brighter than it was when he came into it? We are moved to some grand inspirations which we may not confess in theory. Every man has a theology by which his life is being moved, whether he can put that theology into a form of words or not. Analyse your conduct, that at the very base and core of it you may have certain grand moral or theological aspirations, without which you can neither have hope nor rest.

And is it so that at the last the Gentiles will be judged by the bread they have given and the water they have withheld? Observe, we read that the nations were gathered together before the Son of man. That expression is never used in the Holy Scriptures except with strict limitation to Gentile or heathen people—it is never used as including the whole human family. But let us take it that it is just as it stands here, and the evangelical argument remains unimpaired, untouched. The righteous did not know that they had been doing all this, therefore it was not done for the purpose of securing some happy end ; the righteous had wholly forgotten the beneficent activities which were attributed to them, therefore they had not been mere legalists trying to obey the letter of a law, and endeavouring to set up, by penance or gift, some claim to the ultimate mercy and clemency of heaven. They had been simply breathing a spirit, embodying an aspiration, setting out in beautiful daily life that which was internal and vital and part of their very nature, and had become such by ministries we call divine and spiritual. The others had no such spirit, they did not take life other than as a daily task, a daily burden, something to be got through. If they had been told that by giving a certain portion of meat to the poor every day, they could have had one heaven, why nothing could have been easier to them, but that which appears to be so very easy, may sometimes be found to be

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supremely difficult. The easiest things cannot be done with a slack hand : there is an ease which is the last passion in a very severe process. We know what this is in reading, writing, learning, business of all kinds, inquiry, navigation, poetry, eloquence —everywhere there is a facility which seems as if it cost the doer or the speaker nothing, whereas it expresses the last point of long and complete culture. Do not imagine, therefore, that life is a mere question of giving and taking, without thought, and without idea, and without purpose : you cannot be mechanically pious with any given issue, or with any hope of heaven. Piety is not a question of mechanics or arrangement, of doing this and not doing the other : piety is not a question of abstaining from this and partaking of the other—it is a spirit, a life, an invisible but supreme sovereignty of the soul, and he who enjoys the consciousness of that sovereignty does good and blushes to find it fame. He has no idea that all this is coming back to him in certain forms ; if he had, he would be a mere speculator and investor, a trickster in good doing, and that is a contradiction in terms—our good doing must be our breathing, it must be the habit and spirit of our life, and to be this, it must originate in the cross, take its inspiration from the cross, return for recreating and renewal day by day to the cross ; and doing so according to your nature and opportunity, you will find that all the parables speak the same thing, and that amid the infinite diversity of imaginative expression, there is the same central, substantial, eternal truth.

And then the end : the eternal life, the eternal punishment, I cannot describe either the one or the other : they are both away from me ; but this I know and can say, that the reward of good being and good doing is infinite, but the penalty of wickedness, be it what it may, is beyond the power of human language to express. I leave these definitions to be revealed by the event. No earnest man can trifle with words for the sake of ascertaining how far he may do evil and escape punishment. Punishment for sin is eternal upon earth : no man can outlive his sin in time—for ten or twenty years it appears to be forgotten, you have entered into new circumstances, surrounded yourself with new conditions, and are beginning to be glad. But yesternight in walking out, you saw a face which you supposed to be dead, and instantly the brightness was taken out of your life-scene, and the rocks under

your feet began to shake, and the sin stood up before you as young as ever with an eye undimmed, and pierced you as with lightning.

Sin carries eternal consequences with it. There is only one hope then for you. What is that? Forgiveness. Thank God for that sweet, great word. We may be forgiven. The little critic will still attempt to run after the consequences, and will busy himself with the details of the question, but God is ready to forgive, and then you stand up and say, with all your sins round about you, present to your memory, with the greater grace of God shining upon you, "I was a bad man, I did what I ought not to have done ; I have confessed this to God, not in words only, but with all the emotion and passion of a penitent soul, and God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me."

O that we may know the mystery and the joy of forgiveness as we have known the pain and the shame of guilt.

## LXXXVI.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we know thee by our love : our hearts go out after thee in a great search, and come back with all thy grace glowing the soul and making the life new. We do not know thee by the mind, we cannot lay hold of thee by the senses, thou dost come secretly into the heart and speak to our meekness and love and modesty and waiting patience. Thou hast revealed thyself unto us in Jesus Christ, Son of man, Son of God, to us God the Son, bringing every secret of thy love to bear upon the necessity of our life, and redeeming us not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of his own heart. We do not understand it, yet do we know it well : it is made plain to us by the agony of our heart : we see thy wonders through our tears, we hear thee best in the time of the silence of the night, thou dost shine upon us when all other lights are withdrawn. We feel after God, the heart goes out after thee in mute necessity, and yet in assurance that thou canst and will be found. This we know : we have tested it, and thou hast made us living witnesses of thy presence in our heart and life.

We were as sheep going astray, but now we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls ; we had endeavoured to find for ourselves water in the wilderness, and behold we found none. We said we would smite the rocks and out of them would flow rivers of water ; we smote the rocks and there was no answering stream. We have tried the world and found it a great emptiness, we have seized eagerly every offered cup and found in it nothing but death—but we have come to Christ : he is bread and water, he is the soul's one satisfaction, we rest in him, we find in him the centre of our security and the assurance of our peace as we find in him the peace that is everlasting and the completion of our broken nature. He is our Saviour, and we call him such : thy Son and yet not ashamed to call us brethren, and we have fellowship with his heart, union with the inner spirit of his tenderest love, and because of this sympathetic intercourse we are lifted up into a new nature and intrusted with an infinite liberty and joy.

Thou dost come to us in occasional hours, thou dost take us up into a mountain and transfigure us, thou dost even lift us above the mountain and hide us in the luminous clouds, and there we hear sweet voices, grand with the music of old time, tremulous with answers to the present necessity. Send us down again from high raptures to willing service, to

patient endurance, to waiting upon the helpless and the sick and comforting those that are ill at ease.

We commend one another with all confidence to thy tender care. Some need thee more than others, or so they say, and feel it, because of the urgency of the immediate pain : yet we all need thee equally, did we but know the case as it really is : not one can breathe without thee, we lift our hand because of thine almighty ness, and we sit down and rest because of thy peace. Yet where there is consciousness of immediate need, a great crying pain in the heart, that importunes the Heavens and would seize the kingdom by violence, let thine answer be such as shall give special comfort to special distress.

Enable us to live our few days with all the simplicity of faith, with all the trust of immortal hope, and with all the delight of men who are assured that the very hairs of their head are all numbered and the time of their life is kept in Heaven. Is there not an appointed time to men upon the earth ? Can our grave be dug before the hour which is written in Heaven ? Is not every man immortal until his work is done ? Give us this confidence, then shall we not be startled by accidents, and that which is a tragedy to the vain and the unprepared, will become the commonplace in the infinite movement of thy beneficent providence. Yet thou dost send upon us events with suddenness that break us down. If the blow be sudden, let the grace be an equal surprise : where the shock is startling and distressful, let the healing follow immediately and be the greater miracle.

Thou knowest who are in sorrow and great pain and who are made cold by bereavement and poor by the withdrawal of the choice life in whose smile the lesser lives all lay. O comfort those that mourn, and make our sorrows the roots of our joys. Amen.

### **Matthew xxvi. 1-5.**

1. And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,
2. Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.
3. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,
4. And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.
5. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

**COMPLETENESS OF DIVINE TEACHING.**

“WHEN Jesus had finished all these sayings.” Why not before? Why not have broken off the eloquent discourse midway, so that its latter music might never have been heard by the ages—why not? Consider that question soberly and profoundly, and tell me, is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth, and can any great speech be interrupted until so much of it has been delivered as the ever watching and ever beneficent God deems to be enough? He punctuates our speeches: if it is better that they should be broken off at an intermediate stop, so be it: if it is better that they should go on to a full period and be sphered and rounded in logical and rhetorical completeness, so let it be. Do not live the fool’s life and suppose that any man can kill you when he pleases. The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father. Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom, is a sweet and gracious promise, which has its detailed application to every honest man and every faithful worker.

Jesus Christ brings into his history this word *finished* more than once. In this instance he had finished the Sayings. When he offered his great priestly prayer, he said, “I have finished the work thou didst give me to do.” When he bowed his sacred head upon the cross in the last intolerable agony, he said, “It is finished.” Does he leave anything in an incomplete state? Has he left any star half-moulded, any planet without the last touch given to its infinite circumference? He works well. I am persuaded that he which hath begun a good work in you will continue it until the day of redemption and completion. If we had begun, we might never have finished, but he who began the work is pledged to complete it, and the top stone shall be brought on with shoutings of “Grace—grace” unto it. Build with such stones as you are able to lift: do your little masonry as faithfully, as lovingly as you can, but he that buildeth all things is God.

Here the office of the *Teacher* ceases, and here the office of the *Priest* is about to begin. Correctly and deeply interpreted, the

Teacher *was* the Priest, and the life was the death ; and the doctrine was the atonement as well as the death. But for the sake of convenience, we divide the functions into Prophet, Priest, and King. The Prophet has closed ; the great solemn peroration, broad as thunder, has ceased ; he has just said, “ These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” That was his last word, according to the history which is before us, and when he had spoken of life eternal, his lips closed. There was nothing more to be said of a doctrinal kind—the *priestly* function was to succeed the prophetic. What an air of repose there is about the statement. It reads like a great plan : there is nothing hurried, nothing tumultuous—the uproar is on the outside ; within, and specially in the central Man, there is ineffable peace. He speaks as one who came to his work from the sanctuary of eternity : there is no flush upon his face that betokens surprise, the surprise was in others, to him life was a calm, grand revelation.

How appropriate the last speech : from an artistic point of view the completeness is simply marvellous. There could be nothing to say after the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. We often feel ourselves that after certain men have spoken for any other voice to attempt to make itself heard would be an anti-climax of an intolerable kind. We know when the wisest man of the assembly has spoken ; he has reserved his judgment until other speeches have been made, and when he sits down, no other man could, with any regard to the fitness of things, presume to rise. What could have been said after the twenty-fifth chapter ? The Son of man has come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, and he has sat upon the throne of his glory and conducted the arbitration of the nations, and these have gone away to everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal. After *that*, the only possible eloquence is—the CROSS !

Let us hear his final words before the great tragedy. Said he, in verse 2, “ Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” He never made a more characteristic speech. Here you have the very *heart* of the man talking. Look at that word “ *betrayed*,” and find the whole soul and purpose of Christ. To be *betrayed* was the agony —to be crucified was nothing to the man who would take such a

view of *betrayal*. It was the *sin* he looked at, not the *butchery*. That such *truth* could be met by such *falsehood* killed him. We look at the outward and vulgar aspect of things, we cry around the cross of wood as we see the sacred blood trickling down the beam. 'Tis childish. When we are older and wiser we will cry over the *betrayal*. It is one of the impossibilities of ordinary history : it would be a total, absolute, incredible impossibility, if it did not take place in *our own heart* and in our own house day by day. That such purity, such truthfulness, such beneficence, should have made no deeper impression than this, killed the Son of God ! The atonement was offered in *Gethsemane*, when he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood and said, " Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." *Then* he redeemed the world. The rest was commonplace, the killing, the slaughter, the mean revenge, the triumph of hypocrisy and priesthood.

All the great work in life is done in *solitude*, with the loved ones a few paces behind, with the dearest out of sight, with no one there but the soul and God. Win your battle *there*, and other fighting becomes quite easy, and if you seem to fail in the other fighting, it is only as a seed fails that dies in the earth to repeat itself in manifold productiveness and utility.

Jesus Christ always took the *spiritual* view of an action. He did not ask to be spared the nailing, he took meekly the spitting, for it went no deeper than the cheek—but to be *betrayed* was more than he could bear. To be smitten on the *face*, what was it but to endure for a moment the russianism of the basest men of his day?—but to be *betrayed*—that was the mortal agony, and if we took a right view of life, we should see it precisely as Jesus Christ did—not the robbery but the *plot* to rob, not the blow upon the *face* but the wound upon the *heart*, not the *crime* but the *sin*, would impress us most deeply and pain us most cruelly.

Jesus Christ will, in the judgment, take the spiritual view of every action. He is consistent with himself : he has not two standards or methods of judgment. What we would have done if we could will form our character at the last. We speak emptily and superficially about deeds and actions and conduct—we do not see the *real* deed. Not what my *hand* *accomplishes*, but what my *heart* *would effect*, is my character. Thank God for that. It

may tell against us in this or that instance, but it may also tell for us in the supreme totalising and adjudication of life. God knows what it is in our heart *to be*, and what we can honestly say in our *heart* is what we really *are*. Not our outbursts of temper, not our occasional displays of lowness of disposition, but the supreme desire and passion of the heart will form God's basis of judgment. If we can say at the last, as many a poor misunderstood man can say now—but the church will not believe him—God is better and greater than the church—“Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee”—that love will burn up all the sin, and they shall come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south, and from all quarters, sections, churches, and provinces of human geography and human thinking and human feeling, and the great surprise will be that Heaven is so vast.

“They consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety.” Subtlety—that was their condemnation. Honest men know nothing about subtlety, honest men are fearless, honest men rely upon the instincts of the people, honest men never fear the instincts of a great nation. See how sin debases everything : it turns a grand *magisterial function* into a machine for the performance of little party tricks. Sin blights whatever it touches : if it looks at a flower, the flower dies : if it goes through a garden it leaves a wilderness behind it. It is a most damnable thing. See the Sanhedrim, the great council of the nation, that ought to be its pride and ornament and crown, and that ought to speak with a voice that would commend itself in every tone to the conscience and reason and inner heart of the people, conniving, arranging, temporising, trick-making—and that is the work of the fear which comes of conscious wrong. Fearlessness goes out by the front door, honesty speaks aloud in a plain mother tongue that every man can understand. Honesty may seem to be inconsistent here and there and again, but the inconsistency is apparent only and not real. Honesty can bear to be searched into, for all the parts belong to one another, and they come together and form a symmetrical and indissoluble completeness. Your trick is your condemnation, your subtlety is mere cleverness, it is not philosophy.

But they said, “Not on the feast day.” That is an excellent resolution, not to take Jesus and kill him, and if the punctuation

had been complete there, we would have said, “ They have come to their better mind ;” forgive them, they are going to abstain from their purposed slaughter, but instead of having a full stop after “ day,” we read, “ iest there be an uproar among the people.” A bad excuse, but any excuse will do for persons who are bent on villainy. We are quick at excuse-making, we have the genius of wriggling out of righteous positions and evading sacred duty. Our reasons often come afterwards, and our excuse is but a *post hoc*—it never would have occurred to us, if we had not found ourselves in danger of being ensnared and trapped and killed with weapons we had made for the slaughter of others. Our excuses may ruin us : our little pleas may become the sharp weapons that will penetrate our misspent life. One man thought he had an excuse which would make even the great man dumb ; he said, “ I knew thee, that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hadst not strawed, so I took thy talent, wrapped it in a napkin, hid it in the earth—there it is.” And the great man said, “ Thou knewest that I was a hard man ? Thou *knewest* ? Thou oughtest, *therefore* . . . ” An unexpected logic, a turn in the argument which became intolerable as fire. No excuse can stand the examination of God.

What will Jesus Christ now do with the case so vividly and completely before him ? He will turn away from the great feast of the Jews ? No—he will keep the feast, though he must die. *That* is the Teacher the world wanted, that was the kind of heroism of a moral type which alone could act upon the world like salt, to save it from putridity. He will go to church, though he will be killed under its sacred roof ; he will keep the great historic feast of Israel, though the price he must pay for admission is the price of his life. But in doing that, he will give the feast its highest meaning. Up to this time the feast of passover has been but an historical memorial in Israel, getting farther and farther away from the first incident, and losing, by mere lapse of time, much of its first freshness. But Jesus makes all things *new*. He goes to that last service, and lifts it up to its spiritual significance. May he come to every service of ours and make our homes and prayers and Scripture readings and expositions *new*. That is all we want —larger definition, more fearless application of what we do know ;

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enlargement, not destruction, spiritual interpretation, not mechanical re-arrangement.

Not a word will Christ say against the *feast* : he will *keep* it, he will be a *Jew*, but in keeping the feast, he will give it its last deep and continual signification. Such a preacher do we always want in the church : not a man who will lay down the old hymn-book and say, “ We have had enough of that,” but will *so* sing the hymn as to make us feel we never heard it before. Not a man who will shut up the Bible and make a new one on his own account, but will so read the old Hebrew and Greek and the present English as to make our blood tingle as he reads. Not a man who will take down the grand evangelical system of teaching and doctrine, but will redeem its noblest terms from sectarian uses and lift up into a firmament what has been fastened upon a ceiling. We need no new *doctrine*, but we do need some new *definitions* and larger applications and nobler sympathies and more comprehensive charities.

In going to the feast and acting so, Jesus Christ showed the possibility of the *irreligiousness of some religion*. That is the great hindrance to Christian progress—unchristian Christianity, a Christian *doctrine* without a Christian *practice*. Who is a Christian ? Christianity is a question of the *spirit*, the *heart*, the *inner life*—not a question of mere propositions and theologies and metaphysics and mechanical arrangements of an ecclesiastical kind. If any man have not the *spirit* of Christ, he is none of his, and if any man have the spirit of Christ, I care not in what language he may express himself—most uncouth and not at all orthodox from my standpoint—he is a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Christianity is pureness, meekness, gentleness, sympathy with right, trust in God, charity, forgiveness—against such there is no valid accusation.

The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, were religious after an irreligious kind. The light that was in them was darkness, therefore the darkness was great. They mumbled the right words, but they did not live the right life or develop the right spirit. If you are selfish, haughty, resentful, proud, so sensitive that no man can speak to you about the affairs which belong to your life without your taking immediate offence, are you a Christian ? There is not one element of Christianity in you, though

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you could repeat every catechism and defend with infinite cleverness every proposition made by the corruptest church in Christendom. But if you are gentle, pure, kind, unselfish, noble, forgiving for Christ's sake and because he is in you, you are God's witnesses to the power of the cross. When the Psalmist prayed for the destruction of his enemies he was irreligiously religious. It was religion gone sour, the wine of piety turned into the vinegar of resentment—it showed what men would be even in their religiousness, when left to themselves. The highest justice is mercy, the completest righteousness is gentleness, meekness, trust in God.

## LXXXVII.

## P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thine is a holy mountain, and the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. May we approach thee in a spirit of humility and great expectation, inspired by the hope which thou thyself hast justified, that if we come to thee in the right way, with the right prayer, thou wilt grant unto us gracious replies. We come by the way of the Cross, we come by the way of Calvary—we know no other road ; it is strait, and yet it is broad : we renounce ourselves and accept the Saviour, we put away our own ability, which is utter weakness, and run with eager delight and thankfulness to the almighty strength of Christ.

We come with our accustomed prayer and our accustomed song, yet is our experience new, for thy mercy is always surprising, and thy compassion a continual revelation. Enlarge our prayer, enlarge our praise, and receive, we humbly pray thee, in the name of the Mediator, what we now utter in thy hearing as the supreme desire of our hearts. Thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad, but not glad with sufficiency of joy, for verily our gladness would have purified us, and our very joy would have disputed all dominions but thine own. Yet we are glad of thy tender grace and loving patience and eternal training of our wayward souls—often to ourselves hopeless and only hopeful to thine infinite compassion.

Thou hast arranged our life, thou hast directed it according to thy wisdom : we are here and not there, because the bounds of our habitation are fixed. We are this and not that, because the Lord hath so said. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and he who fixed the sea in its basin hath also fixed the waters of our life in their small channels. We think we are free, and behold we are bound : we stretch out ourselves as if we had stature and height enough, in order to fill all things, and behold the firmament is still above us : it is the bound of its height, and beyond it we cannot move. Thou hast tethered us with invisible chains, thou hast fastened us down to centres, and given us the delusion of liberty, whilst we have been all the while the bondsmen of thy wisdom and love.

We bless thee for this mode of training us ; thou dost lure us by wondrous love along the widening way of life, thou dost promise us that which immediately appeals to our senses, and lo, thou dost train the senses themselves to contemn the blessing, and look for something grander still. Train us, thou loving God ; make of us what thou wilt—thy will alone is good, ours is broken and insufficient to meet the whole necessity—strong only in points, and strong only with violence and not

with the serenity of complete power. Enable us therefore lovingly to fall into the movement of thy will, and to ask for no other composure or rest but to be at one with the purpose of God.

Thou dost make us old day by day, and subtly dost thou withdraw our strength from us, until we know that our weakness is complete. Thou dost not smite us always with the great blow of thy thunder, but thou takest away our days with invisible hands and with silent movement, and we know it not until the sum which is taken is larger than the sum that remains. Others die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, but whether in this way or in that, thou wilt surely withdraw us from the scene which we were not consulted about entering, and thou wilt work out thy purpose on the other side as thou hast done all along without word or will of ours. Oh that we might rest in thy goodness, that we might be taught by the very bitterness of our experience, that we might see how frail we are, and turn our very frailty into a sign or prayer for greater strength.

To-day make us glad in thine house : fill every window with light, come in upon us by every opening, and make our whole heart glad with great joy and thrilling rapture, and while the fire burns may we speak with our lips. Let the day be made memorable because of the large baptism of the Holy Ghost : let all the people praise thee, O God, yea, let all the people praise thee ; thou who dost open dumb mouths and unloose silent tongues, come to us and cause us who have been too long speechless and songless in this house, to utter our prayer and our praise with a new and glad strength.

We pray for our loved ones who are not with us. The number is incomplete, the vacancy is a lesson to our anxious hearts—do thou go after those who have left us for a while : with all Sabbatic comforts make them glad, on the high road, in the wilderness, on the sea—wheresoever they are, let the light of thy Heaven be a Sabbath glory. We pray for the sick, the weary, the sad, the dying ; for the whole side and aspect of humanity, viewing which our hearts sink within us in hopelessness and fear because of our entire weakness and inability to meet the urgent pain. Lord, gather us to thine heart, give us to feel the presence of the everlasting arms, the arms that can crush the universe, but will not hurt a little child. Amen.

### **Matthew xxvi. 6-13.**

6. Now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
7. There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.
8. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste ?
9. For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman ? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11. For ye have the poor always with you ; but me ye have not always.

12. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

### NO WASTE IN LOVE.

**I**N this incident we see Jesus Christ indebted to others. It seems to be a humble position : he is in another man's house, for he has no house of his own—at times he had not where to lay his head. The writers of his story are never ashamed to say so, they do not want any adventitious glory, they do not care to build up a grand exterior : though they claim great things for their Master, they never claimed a house for him : they always found him the guest of others. He receives too the ointment from the woman who poured it upon his head. He had no ointment of his own. If any such token of love or care was to be bestowed upon him, it must be not of his own finding, it must be the expression of other hearts, and at the expense of other hands.

The contrast between this scene and others which have passed before us is so vivid as to be startling. We have seen him in the narrative raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, quieting the storm on the sea, and now he is indebted to another man for his dinner, and to a kind and loving woman for bestowing upon him a token of personal love and regard. He touched the extreme poles — extremely poor, infinitely rich : weaker than a bruised reed, strong with the almighty of God.

How singular the imagination which conceived such a life, how violent in its action, how utterly improbable in its conceptions : how irrational to suppose that the world would receive a story apparently on the very surface of it so self-contradictory and self-stultifying ! Yet truth is stranger than fiction. All these rapid alternations and self-contradictions take place in every deep and great life. If you do not realise within you something answering to the same marvellous rapidity, violence, and collision, blame the narrowness of your own experience rather than doubt what may

appear miraculous to a hope that was never a great flame and to a faith that was more than half mere reason and cold factual understanding.

How *meekly* he receives what is given to him. He realises his poverty. There is nothing of pretence about him : he never takes a thing as if it were not given. He stoops down to bless the giver, to name the donor, so to enlarge the gift and the giving that there can be no mistake about his own poverty in the matter. With no sleight of hand does he take the offerings that are presented : frankly, with all the honesty of a true love, he puts out his hand, receives what is offered, kisses it, places it in his heart, and writes the donor's name in heaven.

And yet consider what it was that he received. Let us look a little into what was actually given to him. What was it in this case ? He sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper : he was eating his daily bread, partaking of friendly hospitality. What else was given to him ? A box of spikenard, very precious, such as, probably, only the comparatively rich could hold in their possession. These were the things that were given. They were poor things, and he was the greater for accepting them in their meanness. Who ever gave him a *thought* ? Who ever enriched him with an *idea* ? Who ever startled him into gratitude by a *revelation of truth* which had not come within his own horizon ? who ever pointed out to him, as the result of a more powerful telescope than his own, some planet in deeper plunges of the sky than he had ever penetrated ? He takes your *bread*, your *ointment*, and shelters himself under the *roof* of our house : at *that* end he is one with us, just as human as we are : tired, he asks to sit down ; thirsty, he says, " Give me to drink ;" without food hour by hour, he is glad to take a meal at any man's table, though he be publican and sinner, and much murmured at and about by those who look upon outsides only. And yet, whilst he is guest, he is *host* : no man can claim any table that he sits at : he fills the place, he leaves more bread than he began with, the feast multiplies under his look. He blesses the house, and it is never poor any more. The last lingering ghost that hid itself in some out-of-the-way corner vanishes, and heaven's cloudless light fills the place as if it had become a chosen temple.

These are the things that prove him to my heart to be . . .

GOD. Again and again we have seen that he is no grammatical deity, dependent for his primacy and sovereignty upon some cunning adaptation of ancient verbs and irregular conjugations, but a regal God, a palpable deity, a friendly God—so near that I can touch him and speak to him, so far that my eye cannot carry its vision to the infinite distance. He is all things : he comes in and sits down to dinner like a common carpenter, his clothes very coarse and mean and much wayworn, and his look haggard, and his eyes dim with watching that nobody could keep up with. Then we call him Nazarene and peasant, Galilean and strange character, partially maniac, evidently gone out of his head, past the thin veil which separates genius from insanity, and we look and wonder and are filled with a piteous amazement that such a Man should run such a course of wildness. Whilst we are wondering, he gives us *one look* which we can never forget, he utters a word as familiar as our mother's name, but with such tonic force as makes it music, revelation, light !

So I find him indebted to others, and yet *not* indebted, for he always gives the very things which he was receiving. This is the way of the Lord : we will come to know presently, if we keep long companionship, and close heart-intercourse with him, that we ourselves are not our own. Simon the leper thought the bread he was giving belonged to himself. Not a crumb of it ! Mary thought she had purchased the ointment or had otherwise secured the spikenard, so that she had a right of property in it. Only in an intermediate sense. The ointment was Christ's before it was hers —she only held it for him. She could not account for what she did. Inspiration has no explanation : it touches the soul and moves the hand like unsuspected presences, and we cannot tell how we did it : we only know that the deed was done. Oh, cold, cold hearts are they that can tell why they do things and set down their reasons in numerical order, and justify themselves upon affidavits, and before magisterial benches. Be mine the life whose reason is swallowed up in higher reason which I have come to know by the mysterious name of inspiration. See him there then, debtor yet no debtor, a receiver and yet a giver, receiving from the hand only, but never having the light that burned in him increased by a single ray from any spark that ever issued from another brain. Set down in your common day books all that

was given to him : any coarse paper will do on which to enter the record, any clumsy pencil will do to write the vulgar words. The pencil will never be required to write *thought, idea, suggestion*, flash from heaven ; revelation from unexpected and unpenetrated sanctuaries. It is up *there* that he is Lord !

But when his disciples saw it they had indignation, and said, “ To what purpose is this waste ? ” In John we learn that it was Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that began the objection and inquired into this matter of what was called waste. Said he, “ Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor ? ” The man who said that condemned himself. He knew the *pence* value of the ointment, and any man who knows the pence value of anything that takes place in the church is a bad man. There is no pence value to the higher life : you jumble unrelated languages. The very question is a condemnation : it was not the question of an economist, it was the inquiry of a *thief*. Do not believe in schedules and tables and comparative statistics in the church. Any man who gets up tables and comparative statistics in the church is either a bad man or a mistaken one : he is always a hinderer of *true* progress. There should be no comparative statistics in the church. What have we to do whether the pews are full or empty, or the treasury exhausted or overflowing ? Nothing. We have to preach the word, declare the testimony, read the writing, decipher the inscription on the cross and on the sky, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and as to comparing this year with ten years ago, let those do so who live in dust, but not those who are here for a night and will be gone to-morrow like the morning dew. Iscariot cannot do anything in the church, but debase and injure it.

Jesus Christ was often *misunderstood* by others. When indeed was he ever understood ? Now and then it seemed as if he was just going to be understood, and then his great heart rocked within him and went out after the understanding man as one might go after a friend long expected and at length come. Sometimes a stranger surprised him by great faith, and he instantly went over the boundary line separating Jew and Gentile, and took hold of him, and with all the pathos and unreserve of an ancient and in-

destructible masonry shook him by the hand and heart, and claimed him by right of affinity.

It must come to that in the last building of the church. We cannot be built upon words and phrases. In the last issue the church will be a church of affinity, sympathy, love, friendship, brotherhood, a commonwealth—men understanding men who never saw one another before, but by look and touch and tone and gesture feeling that brothers of a commonwealth have met.

A man is not necessarily a Christian because he is a disciple, nor is a man necessarily at one with Christ because his name is Judas Iscariot. A bad disposition misunderstands everything. Do not suppose that the bad disposition understands Christ alone ; *whatever* it looks at it desecrates. When a bad man looks at a flower, he sends a chill to its little heart : when a Judas kisses your child, he blackens its soul. Do not go to the bad man for poetry, or for high and bright interpretation of life and nature. The bad man cannot give you what you seek for. Wherever he is, all the holy spirits vanish and leave him in the vacancy of solitude. And yet the bad man can use nice words : he talks about the *poor*. The poor—he would sell his mother's bones to enrich himself ! The poor—he would tear the gas lamps from their sockets in the church and sell them, if he could do it secretly, if he could do it and not be found out ! Yet he talks about the poor, makes a mouthful of the word, says it unctuously, as if he cared for the poor. He can care for nothing that is wise, beautiful, tender, and truly necessitous. The disease is vital, the disorder is fundamental : he is bad in the inner fibres, and every look he gives is a blasphemy. He comes into the church, and he says, looking at anything which he may call by the name of ornament, “ Why was this waste made ? Why was not this sold, and given to the poor, my clients ? ” He misunderstands all beauty, as if the beautiful were not a gift to the poor. Why, sometimes the poor *see more in a picture* than the rich can see. To put up a beautiful building of any kind in a town is to give something to the poor.

What are the poor ? Mere eaters and drinkers, gormandisers, people gathered around a trough to eat and drink ? Have they not eyes, imaginations, sensibilities, divinity of nature that can be-

touched by the appeals of beauty and music and heroism and nobleness? Simon the leper could give a *dinner*, but he who gives an *idea* gives a continual feast. He who shows a beautiful picture, and gets a man to look right into it and through it, is actually giving to the *poor*. We misunderstand the poor when we suppose that they can only eat and drink, and that to give to them means to give them something in their *hands* or something they can gnaw with their teeth. It is a base idea, it is a total misconception of the whole case, it must not have any place in Christ's church. Build the most beautiful churches you can and you sustain labour, you keep men at work in an honest way ; and fill the places with the poor. Every picture may be a hint, every tint of beauty may thrill the soul with a new hope, and every sound of the organ may answer something already in the soul, but silent. Abolish all narrow views, and do not suppose that the poor are only so many machines for the consumption of food and drink. Better to learn in Christ's school than in Iscariot's.

You cannot have any great life without *sentiment*. Life is not all cold logic ; the flowers are the lovelier for the dews that tremble upon them, and you look so much younger and nobler when the tears of real pity are in your eyes—you are not unmanned, you are more than manned. The bad spirit cannot understand lavish generosity, spiritual suggestiveness, or religious sentiment. Only the beautiful *soul* can understand the beautiful *act*. Jesus Christ understood the woman and told her what it meant, though she did not know it. We do not know the meaning of our best acts : I am so afraid that we yield ourselves to those wooden teachers who would always keep us just between two assignable points, who would put down all madness—whereas it is by madness, mistakenly so called, that the world gets on an inch farther on its slow course now and then.

Jesus now becomes the Giver. Making his voice heard amid the tumult, he tells the disciples what the woman has done. She gave the ointment, he gave the explanation, and in that explanation we have revelation. Our deeds mean more than we sometimes mean them to mean, says Christ. “ This is done in view of my burial.” That was a new idea ; the woman did not intend to suggest death and burial when she came with that ointment. “ Ah but,” says Christ, “ this is like a flower laid upon my dead

breast, that is like a finger gently pressing my dead eyelids, this is like an odour of heaven rising from the grave I shall presently occupy." He gives our actions such great meanings—oh, such verge, margin, and amplitude of significance! he makes us ashamed of our very prayers because they are to him so much *more* than they are to us. He interprets them at the other end, and seems to stretch them across the sky, whereas we did but mutter them in helplessness and inarticulate necessity. When Christ makes so much of the deed, we wish we had made more of it ourselves, and made it worthier his love.

Jesus Christ thus befriended others. To *receive graciously* is to benefit the *giver*. There is a way of denying a gift that hurts the heart that suggested it. There is also a way of receiving a flower from a little child that makes the child long for next summer to come around in a great sudden hurry that it may gather all the flowers in the field for you. Jesus took the spikenard, with the infinite grace which is one of the charmful qualities of his nature, took it as if he had a claim upon it, and yet as if he had no claim at all but the claim of poverty and need. "The poor," said he, "I will give you opportunity enough for attending to the poor: the poor ye have always with you, me ye have not always." Seize the fleeting chance, do good to the man who is going next: he may start before you do the great deed. Have some eye to the reality of things, and where there is a man that you can only see to-day, for he will be gone to-morrow, do good to him, and let the ten thousand who are not going to-morrow wait for their natural opportunity.

Tender was the speech, and extorted from him by the woman's tenderness. "She," said he, "is right: she knows and yet does not know that I am going to be buried soon: she knows by a feeling, an instinct, a strange and anonymous impulse that something is going to happen. Thank God for those women-prophets amongst us, and men-prophets, who cannot tell what is going to take place, but know very well that there is *something* in the air, and that work along that apocalyptic line.

There is a good deal that is modern in this ancient instance. Many people care for the poor *multitudinously*, they care for a great *nameless quantity* called the poor, they often mention them over their smoking soup, they sometimes refer to them with most

touching sympathy as they are gulping down their last champagne. They have a warm side for the poor, understanding by that term something immeasurable and far away. They would take the shadow into their own houses if there were less of it, but being so vast they let it alone. These people are great in *epitaphs*. I have sometimes ventured to say that if the dead could rise at night in darkness, and had to return to their several graves in the morning, they would never be able to get back again to their right places if they had nothing to guide them but their epitaphs. They would be so surprised at their own grandeur they would not dare to get in again. Men cannot live on epitaphs, and the poor are not much obliged to us for drinking their health in a bacchanalian toast. Better throw a bone without any flesh upon it to the hungriest dog that ever lived, than talk about all the hungry dogs and give them no bone. Church of the living God, you can be mighty amongst the poor : foiled for the moment in wordy argument, you can set up a plea for Christianity in the hearts of the poor that the poor can understand and apply.

The word *waste* was used in connection with this offering. “ Why—to what purpose—was this waste ? ” The word that is rendered *waste* in the English tongue may be rendered *perdition*. At the last Christ said, concerning this same opposing and querulous Judas Iscariot, “ I have lost none but the son of waste, the son of perdition. He accused the poor woman of having done a perditional act. A man can only speak on the level of his own nature : I have lost him : it was not the ointment that was wasted, but himself that was waste.”

Ay, so it shall be in the judgment. Nothing shall be lost that can be kept, and what is lost shall be the son of perdition.

## LXXXVIII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art always leading us onward to Gethsemane, happy we if thou wilt enable us to sing a hymn here and there on the road. This is thy purpose that we should take our sorrows as the beginning of our joys, and should look onward beyond the place of the shadow into the place of the shining of the eternal light. Our eye will sorrowfully rest upon the gloom, it will not lift itself hopefully and look onward to the light, and herein have we great and needless sorrow, for we remember not that the dawn is at hand, and that thou art preparing us for great visions of glory. Help us, in the spirit of our Master, to endure the cross, despising the shame, and looking onward all the while to the glory that shall be revealed. Show us that the walk is a short one to Gethsemane, there a night of praying and sweltering blood, by and by, and sharply, the cruel cross with its nails and spear, then a moment's burial, and away into immortality. May this lie before us as the open road of the soul, and believing these great and solemn truths may we gird up our loins and pursue the way thou hast marked for our feet. Grant unto us that whilst we are eating the bread of afflictions and the bitter Egyptian herbs, we may see our deliverer and hear the voice of emancipation.

Thou hast led us just in the old Biblical way : no new line have we written, though we have often tried to do so. Thou dost begin with us in the sunny garden where the four rivers are and all the beauteous flowers and luscious fruits : thou dost grant unto us limitation, and bind us to do this as well as not to do that, and we are tempted and seduced and lured by visible and invisible powers, and drawn straight to disobedience and rebellion. We are cast out of the garden into the wilderness, the great, bleak, drear desert, and but for thy mercy we should die there : but thou dost appear for us and grant a great promise, even to the rebellious heart, and thou dost set before our blinded eyes, blinded because of great tears of sorrow, the rainbow of covenant and hope, and the great light of final restoration, being purified by the sacrificial blood. And onward thou dost lead us, over many a weary road, along many a lengthening mile, until we are compelled to sit down for very tiredness, and to beg water from the wayfarer, and yet all the while thou dost show to our eyes the whitening harvest, and give to us promise of plenitude of joy and deep and durable content. Lead on, thou gracious One : we will

follow thee : Saviour of the world, cleanse us every day by thy blood, inspire us by thy Spirit, feed us with thy truth, and sustain us with thy grace.

We bless thee that we cannot die. If any man believeth in Christ, he shall never see death : it may pass by him, and change his relation to things, but he will never see it. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, so now we say, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? " We have conquest and peace through him who was calm with the serenity of God.

We commend one another to thy gentle protection. Regard our affectionate solicitude for one another as a prayer unto thyself and plentifully answer it, thou whose heart is love. We commend unto thee all for whom we ought to pray, the royal, the great, the ruling, those who lead our sentiment and direct our national affairs, for all men in authority and influential positions—the Lord's blessing be not withheld from any one of them, may they be caught in the impartial rain of his grace, and rejoice because he hath visited his inheritance. Regard our loved ones from whom we are separated for the moment ; be with them in the far away city, on the great sea, in the middle of the wilderness, amongst strange people and amongst languages they cannot speak : bring them back to us in thy due course, thou who dost keep the time of the world in the high Heavens. Take up our children into thine arms and bless them, thou Son of Mary, thou Son of every woman.

Oh let thy light and thy salvation go forth like angels over all the earth, drive away the darkness of sin, superstition, error : liberate from bondage all who are enclosed in the prison of fear, distress, or despair, or do thou come, thou mighty One, whose right it is to reign, and having cleansed us in the one fount opened for sin and for uncleanness, and regenerated us by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, may the earth be recovered from her wandering, may the prodigal be brought home again and set among the brotherhood of the stars, to go out no more for ever. Amen.

### Matthew xxvi. 14-30.

14. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15. And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

17. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover ?

18. And he said, Go into the city to such a man and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand : I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them ; and they made ready the passover.
20. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.
21. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.
22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I ?
23. And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.
24. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him : but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.
25. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I ? He said unto him, Thou hast said.
26. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body.
27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ;
28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.
29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.
30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

### SANCTIFIED SYMBOLS.

YOU remember the meaning of the passover : it was a feast of the Jews, established for the purpose of keeping in perpetual remembrance the passing of the Red Sea, the coming out of Egypt, the final deliverance from Egyptian bondage. This festival was kept up every year by the Jews, it was therefore the feast of memorial, its one purpose was to keep continually in view the power and goodness of God, displayed to ancient Israel in delivering the people from Pharaoh and in causing them to pass over the Red Sea as on dry ground.

Jesus, as a Jew, would keep this feast. You *reform* institutions best oftentimes by *remaining within them*. It is true that on many occasions assaults may be delivered from the outside, but as a general rule the great and beneficent revolutions and reforms come from within the institutions themselves, and are unmarked

by the violence of external onslaught. Jesus Christ said, early in his ministry, “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil,”—that is, to bring up to the very highest point of meaning and to cause to pass away, because the divine idea has ripened and culminated and there is therefore nothing further for the institution to accomplish.

The disciples asked him where they should prepare the passover for him. It was a family feast : there was something national in the arrangements, and there was something domestic in the details. All the lambs were brought together, penned together, so that the Jews went down and chose their lambs from the great multitude, and took those lambs to the priest to be examined, that they might be declared to be fit for the sacrifice. Two of the disciples of Jesus Christ went onward to do this preliminary work. They went to the pens, they selected a lamb according to the law, they took their turn amongst the others in having the lamb submitted to the priest’s scrutiny : in due time it was slain in the legal way and eviscerated, and what was designed for the altar was left behind, and the carcase was trussed with two skewers made of pomegranate wood and shaped like a cross, and then the lamb was taken home to be prepared for the evening meal.

The disciples, acting under the instructions of Jesus Christ, were dependent on another man for hospitality. Perhaps John, Mark, perhaps Joseph of Arimathæa—the name is not given. There was no reason to divulge it at the time, and it has now fallen into oblivion. But hospitality was willingly and graciously offered on the occasion of the passover, and those who were very poor, and offered such hospitality as was in their power, were rewarded by having the skin of the lamb left, and by having the vessels which were used at the little feast given to them. The passover was never to be celebrated by fewer than ten or by more than twenty at a time. Jesus went with the twelve—one of them was hardly in the count—it was just about enough. We shall get the revelation why certain numbers were chosen, by-and-by : we shall find that not the smallest thing in the whole economy was done by the law of haphazard or accident.

Look at the little plain table. There is on it the unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, calling up the afflictions of ancient

Israel. On it there was also a dish of bitter herbs, reminding those who partook of them of the hard life which ancient Israel was doomed to live in Egypt, and there was upon it a dish of the conserve of fruits, and that might sweeten the feast a little, for surely in every lot there is one drop of sweetness. And there were three cups of wine, or one cup thrice filled ; it was filled with red wine mingled with water, and it was presented to the head of the feast. He rose and uttered a thanksgiving to God for the fruit of the vine, and partook of it and passed the cup on to the other guests, and then the second cup came and they ate again and commented upon the meaning of the festival, and the third cup was filled, and it was after that, that as they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed it, and brake it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat : this is my body." And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant—rather than testament—which is shed for many for the remission of sins." According to an Eastern custom, the guests put their fingers into the vessels and took out what they required to eat, hence the expression : "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish," he that is dipping it, he that has just dipped it, the hand that has just met mine, "the same shall betray me. It is the last time the hands shall meet on earth, they have joined together in this one act of fellowship ; hence on there will be nothing but disseverance, separation of the widest kind, which no line can measure. He whose hand is with mine in the dish, or has just been with mine in the dish, the same shall betray me."

Such is a little history of this memorial festival, which I have rapidly sketched in order that we may the more vividly realise the scene, whilst I proceed to ask one question and to answer it, namely : Is this the *same* Jesus with whom we have accompanied in the reading of this gospel, these many months past ? Can we identify him as the same—has he changed in any vital aspect or relation ? We have never seen him under such a shadow before. Does he now, under the impending and terrific gloom, reveal the *same features* ? Could little children go up to him *now* and say, "This is the Jesus that once blessed us?" Or is this some fancy portrait, lacking in every element of consistency with the living man who has travelled with us month by month in our Scriptural

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studies and made our hearts burn within us ? To my mind it is the *same* Jesus, and I think the proof is more than ample. Here, for example, is the same absolute *control over all circumstances*, giving him the unspeakable serenity which has always appeared to us to be amongst the sublimest of his miracles. He is in no tumult : the great clock has struck his hour, but the striking has not paralysed him : he is, if possible, grander than ever, as there is about the sunset a royalty that we do not see in the rising sun, a richer pomp, a grander magnificence. In the rising sun there was power, promise, prophecy, the uplifting of one who said, “ I can do it, and will do it ; I will fill the whole arch with light and make it glow with heat,” but about the setting sun there is the calmness of one whose battle is won, a king dying amid pomp worthy the grandeur of his life.

So Jesus Christ calls himself the *Master* even now. When he instructed the disciples to go into the city to such a man, he told them to say unto the man, “ The Master saith.” Coming from his lips these words have great meaning ; coming from his lips *at such a time* they seal him as one who was indestructibly conscious of sovereignty. He does not tremble or cower or beg. He commands even now, without a house to eat the passover in, dependent upon his friends for the last hospitality—he does not say, “ I ask thee, I beg of thee, I entreat of thee,” he says, “ The Master saith, My time is at hand : I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.” Why, this is the very Jesus that looked up and saw Zacchæus, and said, “ Make haste, Zacchæus, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thine house.” He had no house, and yet he seemed to have all houses : he went in where he pleased, and made the place the greater by his presence. Poverty never lost anything by his entertainment, and the rich man always found his silver cup on the top of the sack when he opened it, when his wondrous Guest had gone, and the money was there, and nothing was lost. This is Christian experience the ages through. No man loses anything by Christ. When any man in a moment of haste and thoughtlessness says, “ We have forsaken all and followed thee,” he makes such a reply as causes the man to burn with shame that he was forgetful enough and ungrateful enough to mention the little so-called sacrifice he had made,

Here is a mastery of *details*. Everything was pointed out with the ease and clearness of a man who apparently had nothing else to do. Where the room was, how it was furnished, how everything was to be set in order—so that no two men ever left a master with more carefully or precisely worded instructions. He does not hang down his head that he may sob out his weakness, he does not speak incoherently because of the great pressure that was upon his life, he does not say, “Please spare me now : do what you will, and whatever you arrange, I will accept.” He is still Master, and Lord still, and Great Sovereign yet, and the outgoing of his words is the utterance of a command, and in his look there is nothing to betray the consciousness of fear or the presence of weakness. So far we know we can identify him as the Man who was always the same, who never knew one shock of paralysis, who never hesitated as to the course he ought to pursue, and who, when his voice was lowest, showed that it was not the suppression which comes of weakness, but the lowering of his mighty thunder to accommodate the weakness of others.

Here also we have the same tender *compassion*. Again and again we have seen that compassion is the key-word of the Saviour’s life. But for his *pity* the most of his miracles never would have been wrought. He never worked a miracle merely to exhibit his *strength*. He never hurled his almighty upon the attention of society to overcome men by mere power. He wept, he sighed, he pitied, he compassionated with the most clement and tender spirit ; and because he had compassion upon those who were needy and in pain or in great distress, he wrought miracles for the supply of their necessity, for the soothing of their pain, and for the abolition of their sorrow.

We have the same compassion exhibited in this closing instance of his fellowship with the disciples. Whom does he compassionate now ? He compassionates Judas Iscariot. Think of that for one moment. Surely we read the words in a wrong tone if we read the twenty-fourth verse as a mere threatening—“ Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed : it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” He does not turn upon Judas and look daggers at him : he does not utter these words in a tone of exasperation and resentment, then the occasion would have lost its sublimity. He interprets the great decrees : he

stands fast in the tabernacle of God's eternity, and there might have been tears in his eyes when he said : " Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." Not, " I threaten you with woe," not, " I will one day repay you for this," not, " This is the day of your triumph, but my day will come, and then I will visit you with penal chastisement because of this betrayal." Such a tone would have been out of rhythm with the gospel of his love, and also with the thunder of his almighty-ness ; it would have become a quarrel, a mere contention ; he regarded it as a fulfilment of prophecy, the final expression of that which had been decreed from eternity. Woe will be the lot of him who does this, he will suffer for it when he sees one day what has been done : he will have no joy in this, he will sup sorrow out of a deep bowl and will drink the very dregs of the bitterness. Oh, I pity that man ; it had been good for him that he had not been born.

Do not understand from these remarks that Judas was a *good* man. This does not alter the character of Judas himself : I am speaking of the divine interpretation of a fact, and the divine interpretation of the development of a certain man's character. Judas himself was a traitor, a thief, a man for whom no word of merely personal condemnation is bad enough, but we must not find the whole interpretation of the case herein : there is the divine view as well as the human view, and Jesus Christ pities the man who has fitted himself to carry out this purpose though it be old as the decrees of eternity : he pities the sinner in working out the sin, there is an aspect of every sinner which touches him, not with anger, but with real grief and pity ; when he sees a man breaking his commandments right in two, and throwing the halves away from him with eager hand, he does not burn with anger only. Leave such anger to artificial deities. God is love, and he cries over the poor fool as he sees him doing the wrong. That does not excuse the *man*, that does not make the man one whit whiter or better, but I contend that there is an aspect even of sin which moves the divine pity as well as the divine anger, and I feel that the rhythm of this solemn music is kept up equally throughout, not by interposing notes of discord such as would follow in mere commination or threat of penalty. I would see in these words from Christ's point of view the sorrow which God always feels

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when he looks upon the traitor. We are all traitors ; some have come to public infamy, but all should live in private shame. We may run away from Judas as to the mere accident of what he did, but he is our brother, born in our heart, and we are born in his, so far as the internal act of personal disobedience or rebellion or treachery is concerned.

We misrepresent the great Father when we think of him only as being angry with the sinner. *Anger* never suggests *redemption* ; wherever God has followed the sinner with offers of redemption and mercy and forgiveness, it is because he has looked upon the sinner, not with an eye of anger only, but with an eye of pity and tenderness and compassion, so far as the sinner himself is concerned. He never looks with pity upon the *sin*, he never looks without pity on the sinner.

This is the *same* Jesus then : he is as compassionate as ever, he will love down to the end. Perhaps even on the rack itself he may say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” and if so, he will, to his last breath, be as compassionate as he has been throughout his whole career. Let us wait and see.

In the next place, here is the *same use of incidents*, and the same elevation of opportunities and occasions to their highest significance and purpose. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant.” Have we seen *this* Jesus before ? Unquestionably. Where ? At Cana in Galilee. What was he doing there—was he keeping the feast of the passover ? No—he was keeping a wedding feast, and at that wedding feast he turned the water into *wine*, and now he turns the wine into *blood*. He always moves to some higher generalisation, to some broader gift, to some grander display of beneficent power. Where have we seen this Jesus before ? In the desert place. What was he doing there ? Turning a few loaves into a feast for a great multitude. What is he doing now ? Taking the bread lying before him and breaking it so that it should be in symbol his broken body, flesh given for the life of the world.

Have we seen this power displayed elsewhere? Indisputably. Where? Why in the very beginning. God took the *dust* of the earth and made of it a man. Christ took the *water* and made it into wine: he took the *wine* and made it into blood, he took the bread and made it into flesh—behold I make all things new! think not to say unto yourselves, We are the children of Abraham, for verily I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Think not that you are reputed the succession, and that God is dependent upon you for the continuity of the Abrahamic line: God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

We do not see the deep meaning of things. We read the letter and *leave* it as the letter: we do not *wait until it burns*, and out of it there comes the voice of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hence we have all manner of foolish controversies about the words “This is my body: this is my blood.” Go back to the feast itself, sit down as members of that little band, and watch the action from its beginning, and tell me if the mystery be not imported into it by the priests, for it is not there by the action of Christ himself. When we come to what is now termed the Lord’s Supper, we come to the passover of the Christian Church, we come to eat memorial bread and drink memorial wine. There is no magic about it, no priest’s fingers manipulate the elements so as to change them or give them value. They are to you what you are to them. You do not see them, you eat as if not eating, drink as if not drinking, and if your heart be penitent and broken utterly, and there be no place in it or excuse for sin, and your whole soul goes out after the loving Christ for the benefits of his completed redemption and his continual intercession, you will be as if you had eaten his flesh and drunken the very blood of his heart. Do not try to explain these things in *words*, and do not fritter away your attention and fritter away your love, too, in trying to reconcile these with your reason. You cannot take the whole sun into your house, however broad your window or directly southerly your aspect: you can take in but a ray or two, the great sun does not feel as a prisoner within the lines of your architecture. So with these great sacred hallowed histories and suggestions; they take upon themselves the language of every country, the accent of every dialect, and they change themselves

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so as to throw broadening glory and ample hospitality according to the ever-enlarging civilisation of the world.

And is there some poor soul that is afraid of eating and drinking the bread and wine unworthily? You cannot do so if you eat and drink penitentially. If you turn the action into a revel, into a drunkard's feast, you eat and drink unworthily. It is not *you* that have to be worthy, it is the *feast* that has to be *worthily approached*, that is to say, approached with a due sense of its dignity, meaning, unction, and spiritual suggestion.

The passover was eaten, the mouthful of bitter herbs had been taken by Christ for the last time, the new Symbol had been set up, the law of the passover had been fulfilled in the institution of the symbolic feast. "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." Some few of the men sang the great solemn words of the ancient Hallelujah, then the others joined in saying the last words of the song, and ended with the exclamation, "Hallelujah." They fulfilled the law to the last letter, no jot or tittle of it was taken away. Poor singing it was, from an artistic point of view—grand singing from the heavenly standpoint. If you sing artistically only, the shame be yours and mine. Sometimes the hymn that is *sobbed* may be more acceptable than the hymn that is *sung*. Sometimes the prayer that is broken off in the middle is a mightier intercession than a gorgeous address or a splendid litany. God accepts the heart: he knows what we would do if we could, but "God abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found."

They went out into the mount of Olives. So simple is the action when set down in cold words. There never was such a going out before—there never has been such a going out since! Let us be very *quiet* just now: the Master has *GONE OUT—He is on his way to Gethsemane!*

To GETHSEMANE !

## LXXXIX.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou who hast shown men great and sore trouble wilt revive them again, and their joy shall be greater than their sorrow ; as where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, so where death abounds, there shall be overflowing life, so much so, that the death shall not be spoken of but as a shadow upon an infinite firmament. Thou dost love us in Christ Jesus the Priest : he has bought us with his blood, and to-day we stand at his cross, full of gratitude, our lips eloquent with psalms of adoration and thankfulness, and our whole heart going out after thee in solemn and loving desire. Thou art the same, and thy years fail not : with our growing weakness thou art to us growingly strong, and if our eyes fail, thou dost increase the light according to their failure, so that in our soul there is the shining of everlasting day.

We know these things by our hearts, and can tell them only in feeble and unworthy words : there is no speech for thy goodness of the same pattern and scope whereby we can set it forth to our own hearing and our own vision. The dream is within, the vision is in the heart : we see with our love and hear with the inner ear, and when men ask us for words of publication, behold there is no speech upon our tongue : we can but burn within and feel thy speechless presence. Thou art good to us with both hands : the right hand of the Lord is full of power, his left hand is under us as a security and protection, thine eyes are lighted with love, the opening of thy mouth is as the dropping of honey upon our life, and all round about us, nearer than the living air, is thy presence, a great light, an eternal comfort, a sure and steadfast hope.

We have come to praise thee upon the harp of many strings, upon the organ, yea with trumpets and voices of the heart and soul. We would call upon all things that have breath to praise the Lord, we would demand, in addition to our solitary utterance of praise, the choral service of the universe, for thou hast done great things for us whereof we are glad. Thou dost come into the orchard of our life and do wonderful things. Thou dost sometimes blight the blossom and take away the little bud, so that the hope of the heart is chilled and slain. Sometimes thou dost come in the autumn, and with thine own hand pluck the ripe fruit and hide it in the Heavens. It is all thine, the tender little color, and the luscious fruit, the whole tree, root and branch is thine : it is not ours. So do we say when the blossom goes and the fruit is plucked, "The Lord

gave and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord." One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet ; another dieth in the bitterness of his soul and shall see pleasure no more. Thou dost cut down with mighty strength the life too frail for such power to strike it, and thou dost gather to thyself other lives like shocks of corn fully ripe. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Thou dost smite the mighty man in his eminence, thou dost cut down the cedar and call upon the fir tree to howl because the king of the forest is overthrown, and thou dost take away our father and mother, our wife and child, those that go back to our earliest years and make the foundations of our little history. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away blessed be the name of the Lord. He is the living One, and in him alone is immortality, and if thou dost take away, thou wilt well keep : none shall be able to pluck our loved ones out of the Father's hand. Comfort all that mourn herein, and let their mourning and weeping be but for one night, and their joy for all the next day—eternal.

Let thy blessing come upon us according to the pain of our life and the need which we feel growing into a deep poverty and crying to thee in feebleness. Let our weakness be a plea, let our blindness be the reason of our prayer, find in our necessity the occasion for the exercise of thy grace. Pity us wherein we are little and weak and poor, blind and not able to see afar off, and according to the need of our life order thou the multiplication of thy comfort. Give us an insight, we humbly pray thee, into the inner mysteries, the holy depths of divine truth. May we see the realities of things, may ours be no surface looking, but a penetration, into the soul and meaning of things as they exist and relate to the infinite.

The Lord comfort us with choice consolation, the Lord inspire us with new thought and inflame us with new light: the Lord work in us godly discontent with all present attainments and opportunities—give us to cry for larger growth and nobler attainments and services.

Be with all for whom we ought to pray. Thou knowest why the seat is vacant, thou knowest where the father of the family is, or the eldest son, or the wanderer, or the prodigal that will not come to church. Thou knowest where the sinners congregate and the scorners sit. They are not here to-day, they do not wish to be here, they hate thy house, and they make use of thy name for unholy purposes—yet is thy mercy greater than their sin, thy grace overarches their life as does the great Heaven the little earth. O Lord, continue thy mercy, keep back thy judgments, let the prayers of thy people, like a great wind, keep back the storm-cloud of thine anger.

O Lord, hear us, O Lord, help us, O Lord, forgive us—wash us in the atoning blood, cleanse us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, and make our life richer, greater, grander in all holy aspiration and beneficent uses, day by day, till the sun set, and we pass on to other climes. Amen.

**Matthew xxvi. 31-46.**

31. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night : for it is written (*Zech. xiii. 7*), I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

32. But after I am risen (unheeded words !) again, I will go before you into Galilee.

33. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee (so *Thomas* had said, *John xi. 16*), yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

36. Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane (oil press), and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

37. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy (weighed down).

38. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death : tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39. And he went a little farther (about a stone's cast), and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour ?

41. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing (ready and eager), but the flesh is weak.

42. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43. And he came and found them asleep again : for their eyes were heavy.

44. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46. Rise, let us be going (not to flight but to danger) ; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

### THE CULMINATING SORROW.

"**S**MITTEN,"—but Shepherd still. Strokes do not change character. The Shepherd was not deposed from his tender function ; he was scourged, smitten, oppressed, and grievously tormented, but he was still a *Shepherd*. "Scattered abroad,"—but still the *sheep* of the flock. Understand that *circumstances* do not make or unmake you. You are not Christians because you are *comfortable*, you are not sheep of the flock because you are enfolded upon the high mountains and preserved from the ravening beast. Sometimes the flock is *scattered*, sometimes the shepherd is *smitten* ; but the shepherd is still the shepherd, the flock is still the flock, and the tender relation between the two is undisturbed and indestructible.

If I were a Christian only on my good *behaviour*, woe is me. If I belong to the flock only because of the day's calm, or the richness of the pasture, and because of the plentifullness of all I need, then is my Christianity no *faith* at all : it is a thing of *circumstances*, it is subject to climatic changes : any number of accidents may come down upon it and utterly alter its quality and its vital relations. I stand in *Christ*, I am redeemed with blood ; the work is done ; where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. The church was just as much a church when she was in dens and in caves of the earth, destitute, tormented, afflicted, as when she roofed herself in and painted the roof with gay colours and lighted up the house with rare lights. Let us more and more understand that our election and standing are of God, and are not tossed about, varied and rendered uncertain, by the tumultuous *accidents* of time or by the sharp variations of a necessary and profitable discipline.

Jesus Christ stood always upon the *written word*. When the devil first tempted him, he answered, "It is *written*." Now when the devil has *returned* to him with the whole host of hell embattled against his trembling life, he begins to quote the Scriptures once more. What could we do without the *writing*? We need something to refer to, to stand upon, to quote—the positive and real WORD. When our mouth is filled with that, we feel as if we were equipped for battle. You must not have your Scriptures to

*extemporize* when you need them suddenly : the Bible must be old, venerable, dwelling in your heart, ruling all your thinking, and must be quoted as a *familiar expression*, and not as a rare and curious saying with which the tongue is unacquainted, and to which it takes but unskilfully as to a tune not heard before. “ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”—then, in the fight in the wilderness, you will be master, and in the night of smiting and scattering you will be able to speak of Resurrection and Reunion. Do not let us live in accidents, in transient circumstances and in variable and uncertain relations. We have a *written word* in which we may hide ourselves, we have a testimony cut up into sentences, so concise that a child can quote them, and written with so plain and keen a finger, that if they be quoted with the earnestness of the heart, the very tempter himself will reel under the shock of their quotation.

It is the *Shepherd* that is calm, though he is going to be “ smitten :” the rod is lifted up that will fall heavily upon him, and whilst he yet sees it uplifted in the air, he says to the flock, “ BUT AFTER I AM RISEN AGAIN I WILL GO BEFORE YOU INTO GALILEE.” This is not something unexpected or unforeseen : an ancient prophecy is about to be fulfilled, but after it is fulfilled in what we may term its harsher aspects and meanings, there will come the broad morning of Resurrection, and the infinite joy of renewed, continued, and endless communion.

I am afraid that some of us do but meanly live from day to day in this Christian life. In one sense that is right—that is, so far as the supply of immediate and peculiar necessity is concerned ; but as to its depth, serenity, solidity, and irrevocableness, it is not something buttressed up every day by some new act of masonry : it lies deeper than the granite at the heart of all things. Be peaceful, be quiet, be filled with the peace of God. The *climate* changes, but the *sun* is the same, and is daily relichted by the same hand.

Peter answered and said unto him, “ Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” When men *boast*, such exaggeration is itself a *fall*. If he had ended there, he would have ended as a fallen man. There is a time

when even to speak is a vulgarity : there is a time when to contradict is black blasphemy : there are times when men ought at least to *think in quietness*, and to nurse their resolutions in the secrecy of unuttered prayer. Some virtues are vices—that is to say, their exaggeration becomes vicious. So there were men who prayed so much that they never prayed at all. They lost the *spirit* of prayer, they did not know its meaning ; it became an exercise in speech, in the utterance of language and involved sentences oft repeated, until the exercise became purely mechanical, and so the prayerful words were prayerless speeches, and God neither heard nor answered.

So there is a fast that becomes feasting, and there is a steadfastness that becomes bravado. Let us take care lest we exaggerate our virtues into vices.

Jesus Christ performed what we may call in some sense the *last* of his miracles. It was in sweet and tender harmony with the grand music of the occasion. Said he, “Verily I say unto thee, Peter, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” It was a *mental miracle*, an instance of that prescience of Christ which gave him his infinite superiority above all other teachers. We have seen how often he read the heart, and gave language to the unuttered thought, and brought the fire of shame to the cheek of men who supposed that their heart-thoughts were unread and unknown. Here Christ repeats the mental miracle of foretelling the *mental condition* of his senior disciple, and his moral lapse within a given period of time. How *emphatic* he makes it ; there is music in the word “thrice,” it is a rhetorical word ; all happily balanced rhetorical sentences have in them three members : so there is to be here an emphasis of completeness, harmony, and undeniableness of reality. Thrice. The bad man “walks,” “stands,” “sits”—so it must ever be. Vice must take its little rhetorical curriculum, and finish its bad career according to the ancient and unchangeable rule. When Peter denied once, he might have recalled almost his breath, and denied that he had denied ; but this boasting shall be humiliated, there shall be left no doubt or hesitancy on the part of Peter himself, that the denial was threefold, complete—in its way *infinite*.

So verily it has been in the history of the whole world. We

are not left in *doubt* as to our sin. It is thrice-sin, fold on fold, and to deny it is to *aggravate* it. There are no once-done sins, “Thou shalt deny me **THRICE**.”

Peter said unto him, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” It was honest ignorance : it was the worst kind of ignorance, the ignorance of one’s *own heart*. Until we know what our heart really is, we can have no conception of what Christ proposes to do. Young, strong, prosperous, flourishing, with the colour of health upon our cheeks, and with the energy of health in our step and our mien, we cannot understand Christ’s great speech to the heart. He must reduce us, humble us, grind us to powder, fill us with shame, drive us out to weep bitterly, and in that infinite rain of penitence he may say something to us that will lead us to God. Meanwhile he let the boastful man have the last word : to chide such ignorance was to waste energy and time. He allowed the disciples to have the last word. On other occasions he had the last word, but was this a time for chaffering, was this a season for the adjustment of relations, or for the assertion of supremacies ? He allows the boaster to have the last word, that having his own word ringing in his ear, he may the more accurately and vividly remember it when the stroke falls and his tortuous lips utter the speech of denial.

“Then cometh Jesus with them into a place called Gethsemane,” up to that time a local name. Just as the bread we have spoken about was ordinary, and suddenly became “body ;” and the wine, the common red wine mixed with water, which suddenly under a touch and a look became “blood,”—so this place called Gethsemane can never hence on through all the ages change its name. It was an olive-yard, and in it was the olive-press. The olive was the emblem of *peace*. Under that great solemn passover moon there bent down One in infinite agony who is *our Olive, our PEACE*. Let us repeat these words to the soul, till they become tender by gracious familiarity. “He is our Peace : he hath made both one.”

Then saith he unto them, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” *That* is the time for a man to answer the question whether *he has a soul*. That is not a question for intel-

lectual debate or metaphysical inquiry, or for the sharp exchange of skilfully chosen words. When such debate goes on, the soul may well have retired into some secret place to cry over the degradation to which it has been subjected by the superficial inquiry. There is a time when no other words will express a man's consciousness and experience but . . . "MY SOUL." Speak to a man in those educational hours and a great pain goes through him like a dart of fire. Then *dare* you ask him if man has a *soul*? There are *bodily* troubles and there are troubles of the *heart*, and are there not griefs which are peculiarly agonies of the *SOUL*? For every blood-drop we are implicated in the fierce endurance and trial. Let not those come into this sanctuary who have no great woes, but into it there will come an innumerable and reverent host of hearts that have known the bitterness of sorrow and the grief of death. Do not suppose that the soul's existence is to be proved by *words*. There will one day come into your life a *pain* which nothing but the *soul* could *feel*. Once felt it can never be forgotten. Wasted are those hours which we spend with men whose souls have never been *tried*. It is an exchange of words, a bantering of foolish sentences, one against the other. Let men meet who understand one another by the masonry of a *common grief*, and they will tell those who are outside how true it is, not only that man *has* a soul, but *is* one.

This is *not a complaining voice*. We have never heard the Master complain. He has stated his circumstances, he has told those who would follow him, without sufficiently counting the cost, that he had not where to lay his head, but he announced the circumstance with a cheerfulness of a divine content. Now he brings into his speech a tone we have never heard before. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Had he been doing *wrong*? No. Had he changed his course? No. Was he proposing to the world some new and forbidden line of liberty and delight? No. But the *purpose* of his own heart is ripening, and the divine decree is coming to the utterance of its last syllable, and the prophecy which has been the poetry and the light of the world is now about to pass into stern and solemn history, and in that transition this agony is felt.

Yet how *human* he is. "Tarry ye here," said he, "and watch

with me." There are times when even a little child would be a defence for a strong man ! There are hours of fear in which, could we but feel a child's little touch, we should be men again ! There is a loneliness which the soul cannot survive ; it must fall before it like a victim, though, being true in itself, and gracious in its purpose, it will rise again, and the great multitude shall gather around it to maintain with it and through it eternal fellowship.

He would have with him the very men who were going to flee away from him. He could only build with such materials laid to his hand. It was rotten material—sometimes we put out our hand to a *yielding sod*, thinking that perhaps it will not altogether give way till we get higher up through its uncertain help. These men were about to flee away from him, but he would just have them remain to give him such little comfort as was in the power of man to give under circumstances so tragic. You have been under the weight of long dark cold nights of loneliness, when a child's little silvery laugh would have made you heroic as an army of soldiers. In such nights you have felt the need and the value of a little *human sympathy*. Oh the touch of a friend's hand, the look of a loving eye, the utterance of a voice of trust and loyalty —these would have been right eloquent in certain periods of intolerable silence !

" He went a little further and fell on his face." There are weights that crush men down *so* ! They do not then ask what is the proper attitude in prayer—you will be told, you will be *put* into it, there is a force that will attitudinize you without any study on your part, a mighty terror-force that will dash you on your face ! In *such* circumstances ask a man as to the legitimacy and utility of prayer ! Such are the circumstances for the answering of such questions. In one case you will discover whether man has a *soul*, in the other case you will discover whether it is any good to *pray*. The question is answered from *within* ; the reply does not come as the answer to the long, connected, and subtle argument, but within you breathes the *suppliant* that will not be silenced, in your soul is the *intercessor* that *will* pray. Do not discuss these questions about the soul and prayer in cold blood and in cold words. Leave such great inquiries to be answered by the *tragedies* of your personal experience.

"And he went a little further and fell on his face and prayed." This is the Lord's prayer ! O my Father"—why that is the prayer he taught us long ago—just the same ! What said he when we asked him, "Lord, teach us how to pray?" Said he, "Our Father." Now, when he has to pray himself, what says he? "O my Father." It is the same Jesus : He is the same yesterday, to-day, for ever. What, was God a Father *still*? When the Shepherd was being "smitten," when the flock was being "scattered," when the night was getting colder, deeper, darker, when in the wind was the breath of pursuing hell, was God *still* Father ? By this standard let us try ourselves. If the great Ruler of the universe come to us in sunshine only, mighty, grand, majestic, royal, we have lived the wrong way : we should have lived up into tenderness and filial trust and gracious expectation, and the deep happy assurance that how dark soever be the clouds, they are the dust of our Father's feet.

Now he is shut up and alone with God. There are times when we must keep our dearest companions at a little *distance*. There are seasons when a man must be as if he were the only man in God's universe, and as though face-to-face speech with the Father could alone determine and overrule the crisis of agony. We pray a certain kind of prayer in the great congregation, a necessary and beautiful prayer, the expression of common praises and common wants. But there is another kind of prayer which none but God may hear. If it be heard by our mother even it will be spoiled. If we could know that the friendliest ear were overhearing it and catching the words before they got to God's ear, we should feel as if the life-stream had been diverted and had changed its course and gone on a wrong career.

What are your troubles—are they but transient aches and pains, small ailments for which the handiest doctor has an immediate remedy ? Then you cannot follow into this great darkness of the passover-night. But is there bitterness of soul on any account whatsoever, real feeling in the innermost chambers, so to say, of the soul ?—then the Lord's prayer is written here for our use according to the measure of our necessity. He will have the great harmony established ; the great harmony of the universe takes all its utterance and expression from the divine will. The moment you have *two wills* in the universe, you break up its harmony :

there can be in a harmonic universe but *one will*, and that is *God's*; our will must fall into it, become part of it, and must express it in such phrase and accent as our circumstances enable us to realise.

Jesus Christ will now dispense with miracles: he could have performed a miracle by prayer, but he will not. This shall not be done by spears and swords and angelic hosts: it shall be a question of *will*. So the miracles might well have ended there, and have all sunk in the majestic cry, "Thy will be done." There is no further prayer: that is the all-inclusive and all-culminating desire and petition. Yet the angels will come. We read elsewhere that an angel came and comforted him. Surely we have heard of that angel before—*where* did we hear the rustling of those wings before? In the wilderness! "Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." And here in Gethsemane, a bleaker wilderness, a drearier desert, when his soul was afire with an infinite agony, and when out of his skin there dropped as it were great drops of blood, behold an angel came and strengthened him!

The universe is one: who could live in a universe that was nothing but what he could see? What, the universe no bigger than my sight, my power of vision and capacity of intaking and realization? It were a mockery, not a universe. When you tell me the air is full of angels and the great blue heaven is an infinite church, and that all things live, that God is over all, blessed for ever—you satisfy something that is in me, you answer an unuttered prayer!

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### SELECTED NOTES.

"Here, then, we have two subjects of contemplation distinctly marked out for us. 1. The irreparable Past. 2. The available Future. The words of Christ are not like the words of other men: his sentences do not end with the occasion which called them forth; every sentence of Christ's is a deep principle of human life, and it is so with these sentences: 'Sleep on now'—that is a principle; 'Rise up, and let us be going'—that is another principle. The principle contained in 'Sleep on now' is this, that the past is irreparable, and after a certain moment wak-

ing will do no good. You may improve the future, the past is gone beyond recovery. As to all that is gone by, so far as the hope of altering it goes, you may sleep on and take your rest ; there is no power in earth or heaven that can undo what has once been done."—(ROBERTSON.)

"Here seems to be a contradiction : he bids them rest, and yet by-and-bye he says, 'Arise, let us go hence.' Some answer that he speaks by way of upbraiding and not of permitting ; but Mark makes it plain, that after this speech, staying awhile, he stirred them up again, saying, 'Let us go hence.' For having bidden them sleep, he says, as after some intermission granted, It sufficeth, and then the hour cometh, etc."—(AUGUSTINE.)

"Even as water may be pierced with a weapon, and so likewise the fire and the air, yet they cannot be said to be wounded ; so the body of Christ might be beaten, hanged up, and crucified, yet these passions in his body did lose the nature of passions, and the virtue of his body, without the sense of pain, received the violence of pain raging against him. The Lord's body indeed had been sensible of pain—if our body had been of the same nature to go upon the water, and not to make impression with our footsteps, and to go through doors that were shut. But seeing this nature is proper only to the Lord's body, why is the flesh conceived by the Holy Ghost judged by the nature of a common body ? He had a body indeed to suffer, but he had no nature to grieve."—(HILARY.)

## XC.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, grant us thy peace. The peace of God passeth all understanding. Great peace have they that love thy law. O that we had hearkened unto thy commandments, then had our peace flowed like a river, and our righteousness had been as the waves of the sea. Jesus, Lamb of God, Saviour of the world, grant us thy peace. Not as the world giveth dost thou give—say unto us, “ Peace be unto you,” and there shall be a great calm. Thou art the Prince of peace, the Son of peace, the Spirit of peace : may we know that thou art present in the soul by the peace that reigns there. Deliver us from all quietness that is deceitful, save us from lulling our souls into unholy slumber, and grant us thy peace, thine only, too deep to be measured, too calm to be expressed in words.

We have sinned against thee, and therein has our peace been destroyed. Truly we can say, there is no peace unto the wicked. We have felt the sting of conscience, the torment of remorse, the gloom of guilt and despair, but in the night of our sorrow and woe thou hast sent unto us angels of light with promises of pardon, and we have been led to the cross on which there died thine only-begotten Son, our Saviour and Priest and Surety. He is our Peace, he hath made both one. He is our Daysman, and he has laid his hand upon thee and upon us, and has made reconciliation. Great is the mystery of godliness ; we cannot penetrate it with our understanding, we cannot receive it into our minds, but we can feel it in the heart, our love answers it, and the appeal of thy grace is replied to by the cry of our penitence.

We have come to worship God and to eat bread at his table. He establishes the feet of his saints, and watches the outgoings of them that are his. Behold we have in our hearts the sacred vow, upon our tongues is the holy word, and in our understanding is the conviction of thy presence and grace. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done, and when we say there is no health in us, we feel how dead we are. We do not interrupt our confession with excuses and pleas ; we fall down before thee, infirm, broken, shattered, without one word of self-defence. Thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust, a wind that cometh for a little time and then passeth away. Thou wilt not thunder upon us with thy great power, thou wilt not magnify thine almighty in our destruction, thou wilt rather lift up thine omnipotence in pledge

of thy pity, and in the great power of God shall we find the tabernacle of his grace. In wrath remember mercy : remember how frail we are, remember that we are of yesterday and know nothing : see how few are our years, a handful at the most, and pity us and love us with continual compassion.

We bless thee for the year now closing around us as a church and people. Thou hast brought us to the day of temporary farewell : looking back upon all the past we bless thee with full heart, we thank thee for every revelation of thy truth, for all the light which has gleamed upon us from the upper places, and for all the comfort that has strengthened and encouraged our life. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Thou wilt conduct us to the end, thine hand of defence will never be withdrawn ; when heart and flesh do fail, thou wilt be the strength of our heart and our portion for ever.

Pity all that has been amiss. Come with thine infinite forgiveness upon every guilty deed, and from the cross of thy Son our Saviour, absolve us from all sin. Wherein we have been good and have done good, to thy name alone be the praise.

Help us to resume our work with all thankfulness of energy and of hope, with invincible strength, with perfect consecration of mind and heart. Thus may we spend the years and prepare for the great eternity.

Comfort all that are sore of heart, speak a message of encouragement to those who need to be touched gently, or they will surely die. To the stranger within our gate speak home words that shall touch the heart and comfort the life with a new solace.

Pardon our sins, forgive our enemies, include within thy love our friends who are absent from us but who are longing to hasten back. Take up the lambs in thine arms, thou Shepherd of Israel ; save with thine almighty strength those who cannot save themselves, and when the discipline of life is perfected, may we begin the study and the service of immortality. Amen.

### **Matthew xxvi. 47-75.**

47. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he : hold him fast.

49. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master ; and kissed him.

50. And Jesus said unto him, Friend (comrade), wherefore art thou come ? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

51. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place : for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels (the possible and the impossible) ?

54. But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?

55. In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief (as against a robber with swords and clubs) with swords and staves for to take me ? I sat (a sign of authority) daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

56. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

57. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas (already committed to the policy of condemnation, John xi. 49) the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

58. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

59. Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought (a word which implies a *continued process of seeking*) false witness against Jesus, to put him to death ;

60. But found none : yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61. And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

62. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee ?

63. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power (*the* power), and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy : what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

66. What think ye ? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

67. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him ; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

68. Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee ?

69. Now Peter sat without in the palace : and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

70. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. . .

73. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them ; for thy speech bewayeth thee (the Galilean *patois* was probably stronger when he spoke under the influence of strong excitement).

74. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the (the Greek has no article) cock crew.

75. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

### THE ARREST OF CHRIST.

OUR concern is to know the spirit and conduct of Jesus in this transaction. How does he hold himself, by what spirit is he animated, how does he stand the stress of his infinite trial ? We have little to do with the rabble gathered around him : we have only to do with the ruffian band in so far as it shows, in luminous contrast, the spirit and service of Jesus Christ. Observe what a grasp of *principles* Jesus Christ displayed in this culminating hour of his life. There are crises in which men are obliged to look about them for their principles. There are occasions upon which men of wit can answer surprising assault ; there are other days and nights wherein a man has no wealth if he be not rich in *doctrine, principle, and conviction*. Riches of an earthly kind make themselves wings and flee away, but there are unsearchable riches that reveal themselves in glittering brightness when the soul would otherwise be in its poorest and most painful condition.

There was one impetuous man on the side of Christ, who stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear. That was a *little* man : he mistook the range and scope of energy—he was the victim of the continual sophism which debases our thinking and causes our action to palpitate with vicious life, that it is necessary to *do* something. Jesus found a place in life for Simon. Jesus Christ showed what could be done by *submission*. Peter was anxious to meet force with force, a sophism so plausible that statesmen have been victimised by it, and men of every age have fallen down to worship that golden calf. It seems to be born in us, does the feeling that force must be met by force. There is a force of *passiveness*,

there is an energy of *silence*, there is the magnificent retort of non-resistance, which puzzles men of common mind and ordinary heart, the very mystery of heroism to those who mistake noise for music and tumult for power.

The answer which Jesus Christ made upon the occasion showed that he was not too absorbed to neglect even the trifling incidents connected with the infinite tragedy. “Put up again thy sword into his place.” That would have been a mere instruction, but following that instruction is the philosophy of civilization, the key of all definite and lasting progress, the very glory of human statesmanship and political and spiritual security. Who *then* could have expected another gospel? who could have said that even upon so trifling an occasion Christ would have interjected a *revelation* that would gleam in ever-growing brightness upon the mind of the ages? Yet that was exactly what he did. Not only did he give the instruction, “Put up again thy sword into his place,” but he gave the *reason* for the instruction, namely, “For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” If he had never said anything in his life but that one word, he would have laid down a rule that the world would have *grown up to* in all its education, disappointment, falling, and failure which it has experienced. We pass over the words lightly as we pass over all the grandest words ever spoken by the human tongue. We are so occupied with the anecdote, the moving panorama, the startling incident, that we overlook the philosophy of the grand, moral revelation, and hasten on, like impetuous Peter, to “see the end.”

Jesus Christ did not attempt to snatch a transient victory. “Suppose you, Peter, could cut down all these men to the ground, it would amount to nothing: their progeny will come up: evil has an indestructible posterity, if it be encountered only by *force*. There must be *another* method of attacking this disease: it cannot be cut down with cold steel, it must be met by heavenly ministries, by spiritual and regenerative influences—put up again thy sword into his place.” It could do nothing in the spiritual kingdom; when force meets force, death falls upon all who use it. There are triumphs, there are defeats, and there are failures that are successes: do not suppose that to smite down an *enemy* is to overcome the *enmity*. One wonders that men, reading these great sentences, so great yet so small—that they do not instantly un-

cover in the presence of a Peasant who laid down in terms so luminous and definite the philosophy which underlies every beneficent and stable civilization.

Jesus Christ reminded Peter that all that was happening was in *fulfilment of the Scriptures*. “ But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? ” Connect yourself with *Destiny* if you would be calm : do not live in the spluttering and dying anecdotes of the passing day. Consider that all things are elect of God, and move you in the current of His foreknowledge and forearrangement of things. You will be troubled, tossed about with every wind of doctrine, if you are living only from day to day, and upon the breath which is breathed from the human mouth. We must live in *the eternity of God* if we would be quiet amid all the storm and stress of life. There are some who resent the idea of a supreme will, or must boast of the predominance of Fate. This is a doctrine you cannot escape : your life is either gripped and driven by *Fate*, or must be ruled and blessed and sanctified by a Supreme Will.

But observe how evilly do they think and speak, who suppose that, having ignored the reigning will of God, they can rush into the cold and chilling sanctuary of impassable and inexorable Fate. Life, come upon me as thou wilt, I live in the will of the *Father*; whatever happens to me happens that the *Scriptures* must be fulfilled. The writing is old, and is rewritten every day—every life is a revelation, every breath is a miracle. Stand thou, O living man, in this sanctuary, and no fool shall be able to throw a stone into the depths of thy peace. Do not suppose that men come around you *accidentally* with swords and staves : they know not what they do : if your purpose is right, if your prayer is pure, if your face is set steadfastly, even with hardness, towards the Jerusalem of your destiny, you will be an ever-quiet and all-quieting presence in life.

The mistaken thinker is always caught in his own snare. Those who would escape from Will, fall into the arms of iron Fate, and those who decline to be guided by the *Scriptures*, which were fulfilled in the case of Christ, go straight over to *another* revelation, which is incomplete without the written one. You cannot escape from prayer. You can run away from the altar of the church, red with blood glowing with fire, but you go to an altar of *ice*, and'

breathe out your soul's wish into a dead ear. Still you *pray*. You run away from the living paternal beneficent will, and try to quiet yourself with such narcotics as are handed to you by the iron hand of unpitying Fate.

One of the ablest minds that ever led the sceptical thinking of his time—I do not hesitate to say that I refer to Thomas Paine, a resolute and energetic thinker, and a man not without beneficence of purpose and patriotism of heart—has laid down the sophistical and monstrous proposition, that a revelation can only be made to *one man*, that no revelation has been made to *us*, therefore the revelation which Christ claimed to be fulfilled in his history was no revelation to *after ages*. How truly has every Achilles a vulnerable heel! A revelation granted only to one man? But there is a *daily revelation*, there is a *lasting* revelation of *nature, providence, history, law*, and when this lasting revelation, which comes to repeat its story *every day*, confirms the revelation that was given to minds and hearts in the *ancient time*, the revelation of to-day repeats in modern tones, and with present-day applications, all that was true in the immemorial time.

But the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Fulfilment of Scripture is the rewriting of Scripture. No promise can be realized without being written over again in its very realization. It is because human life takes up and repronounces divine words that the Bible keeps its hold upon human confidence and human love. Were it an old book, in the sense of speaking terms that have no immediate meaning, it would by mere lapse and effusion of time disable itself from holding supremacy over human thinking. It is because its words are old as eternity, yet *new* as the present morning, that the Bible is what it is and where it is.

So Jesus Christ rested in the fulfilment of Scripture. He laid his hand upon Destiny as ruled by a personal Will, and getting such hold of such principles, he was calm to apparent passionlessness. Once indeed there was a ripple upon his placidity: said he, “Are ye come out as against a THIEF?” His soul was stung there. He knew that was the way thieves were taken, and to be thought a *thief*, to have all evil names fastened upon him, did seem to sting him into a question that might have in it one spark of sacred resentment. Or was he mocking the fools, was he showing them to what an unnecessary expenditure of strength and

force they were going? Was he a man who would run away? Judas indeed said to those who were with him, "Hold him fast," probably not through any spirit of cruelty, but where a man lays hold upon the lightning he must hold it *fast* if he would keep it. Was there not some subtle tribute in this very exhortation addressed by Judas to the *russian* band? Did he not in this one exhortation seem to say, "I know his strength: I have seen his power: there is no limit to his resource. This is no ordinary culprit or criminal, if so we may describe him. Having touched him, surround him, draw a cordon round his life, or he will surely elude you?"

Sometimes men pay compliments unconsciously, as many men pray to a God they profess to *ignore*. Instinct may be relied upon more than argument: the inborn impulse of the heart will assert itself above all controversy and logic and intellectual creed. So the time will come when even Judas shall add a laurel to the chaplet which binds the temples of the Saviour, and therein shall the word be fulfilled, "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall the crown flourish." I know not but that when Judas himself will yet come to write the epitaph of Christ, we may find that grim monster of iniquity carving upon the marble rock—"INNOCENT BLOOD."

Then how grandly does Christ move between the possible and the impossible. When he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? I *can*, and yet I *cannot*. The possible is impossible." Have we not lived that strange experience? To the man who lives only in the letter the statement that the possible is the impossible will appear to be a contradiction in terms. It is the very key of life! you *can* do things which you *cannot do*: you *cannot do* things which you *can* do. Learn that lesson and life will have new aspects, and every day will have new experience. As a mere matter of "*can*," you could do the most outrageous and monstrous things this very day, and yet you could not do anything of the sort. You can burn your property, insult your friends, dismiss your servants, if it were a mere matter of *literal ability*, and yet you could not do one of these things! What keeps you back?

Not force, not a sword—an invisible principle, a conviction, common sense, thought—all unknowable, unnamable, immeasurable qualities. As a mere matter of literal ability there is no length of absurdity to which you could not go, and yet you cannot take a single step in that direction—cannot, because of will, thought, sense of the fitness of things, because of the inspiration of righteousness, the dictation of justice and the regulation of common sense.

So Jesus Christ says, “ I could pray for angels—and yet I cannot : there is a pressure upon me which I will not resist : how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? ” How they tried to kill him : they wanted to be murderer without having the remorse of murder in their souls. That is what many men wish to be ; if there were no hot blood in the case they would kill so quickly : it is the *stain* they cannot rub out, that they fear. Blood spouts out of the veins and splashes things that are a long way off ; it is difficult to erase, it tells its burning story to scientific inquiry, falls in unlikely places, and comes up with speech of horrible eloquence to those who are in quest of the murderer.

How the Saviour was *watched*, malignly watched, always watched, watched with eyes theological, eyes political, eyes of envy, eyes of passion. No wonder. He opposed himself to the religion of his times—whoever does that, *dies*. He opposed himself to the orthodoxy, the respectability, and the self-security of his age, and whoever does that, *dies* !

When they urged him, and sought to drive him to extremities, we read these wonderful words, “ But Jesus held his peace.” That was probably the crowning miracle this side the cross. The great Speaker dumb, the Man of eloquence without a word upon his lips—silence was then truly golden. What *made* him so quiet ? The struggle in Gethsemane. There was nothing *more* to be said : the Man who had passed through *such* experience was bound to be quiet. This is no arrangement or trick or expedient : it comes up out of the philosophy of the case. When we return from some grave-sides we cannot speak. When we leave some altars after all-night prayer, we cannot speak for the next three days. We seem to our friends to be distract, absent, lost,—with a singular shining in the face, a new gentleness in the

hand : it is not derangement, it is the fulfilment of the unwritten Scripture that *sorrow conquered* must be followed by *eloquent silence*. Have we not sat together when the favorite child has been taken out of the house to come back no more, and have spoken to one another never a word ? Have we not sat down with our smitten friends seven days at a time and never said a syllable because their grief was very great ?

The battle was won in *Gethsemane* : to have spoken after *that* would have been to degrade the grandeur of all that made the life of Christ sublime. Yet when he did speak, under the pressure of the High Priest, he spoke in a fitting tone. “ Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.” What could you do to a man who talked *so* ? You cannot smite that man to his hurt : he is above your touch. You smite, and he does not feel the smiting : the *soul* in that hour is so much greater and grander than the *body*, that the body is but as a dead surface to the hand that ill uses it. Live in heaven, live in the actual possession of God’s blessing, have your tabernacle and your pavilion in *Eternity*, and not a hair of your head shall perish. What could death be to a man who talked *so* ? He had *abolished* death : they met, they caught one another in their terrific arms, and Death was left where the blood-sweat fell !

Now the hounds of hell have their turn. Who could find such reading as this—“ Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands ?”—six fists fell on him in a shower, and the villains said, “ Who smote thee, thou Christ ?” Then all spat together, and asked him to name them one by one. But they touched him not ! All bad men do this selfsame thing. This is not an old villainy, it is a daily crime. We sit in church and shudder at the old Pharisees and Romans and Jews, and therein do we put the Scriptures eighteen hundred years away from us and make them a story-book, whereas we *all* live in this sixty-seventh verse.

Something *did* grieve Christ more than the enemy. Peter cut his heart in two. The *enemy* cannot hurt a man : if it had been an enemy that had done this, he could have borne it, but it was thou, a man mine equal, my acquaintance ; we went to the house of God together, and together kept holy day. That is the

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sting! Peter said, “I know not what thou sayest.” Then he added, “I do not know the man.” In the third instance he began to curse and to swear, saying, “I know not the man.” That surely is an ancient anecdote? so it is—yet it is *not a day old*: it was done this morning, *we* do it in some instances day by day. We are orthodox in *conviction*, we are heterodox in *spirit* and action. No enemy can hurt Christ as a friend can hurt him. The enemy does not get at his *heart*, the friend does. Peter is living now, he is living perhaps in the very most of us—not in this rough and violent form, but in some mood more subtle yet not less deadly in its expression. O Searcher of hearts, have I denied the Saviour—have I made light of his name in order to avoid the mocking sneer of some enemy? Have I pledged his name in order to sanctify some bad transaction? Yet there was one thing about Peter that gives one hope: this was the *weakness of violence*, and therefore it will have suitable *reaction*. When he began to curse and to swear, I began to have hope of him. If he had coldly said, “I know not what thou sayest,” he might never have been recovered. The *violence* of some cases is their *hope*. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, “I know not the man.” The lips now foaming with such madness will presently pray. We say it is never so dark as before the dawn. Have hope of your worst ones: they may come back yet. Backsliders return. Do not give up those who have left you as if they would never, never be seen at home again. You tell me their last words were so violent and so severe. *That* is my very hope of them. It is very dark just now: let us go to the door—open it—and perhaps, there in the darkness, we shall find the violent one, “weeping bitterly.”

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#### NOTE.

*At the end of this volume will be found a special examination of the character of Judas Iscariot. The line of thought which is there pursued may be novel to some readers.*

XCI.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, because the house is thine, there is peace in it, and a great light makes it glad with a morn bright as heaven. This is the day the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it. We would fain dry our tears to-day and have nothing but joy dwelling in the heart and singing along all the range of the redeemed life. Thou hast redeemed us with blood, thou hast encountered the adversary in mighty battle, and behold the outshedding of the blood of the heart of Christ was the very victory of the Son of God. We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ thy Son. We know not the price thereof : they only who have lived long as thyself can add up the mighty value. To us it is precious, redeeming blood, the blood which cleanseth from all sin, the answer of God to the wickedness of the world.

We have come up to thine house with all musical instruments making glad noises, with shoutings of the heart because of thy goodness, yea our whole life lifts itself up in anthems of joyous praise, because thou hast beset us behind and before and laid thine hand upon us. Thou hast held over us the lamp which thou hast set for thine anointed, and thou hast found for us a rod and a staff. We have come to render our whole life to thee in grateful return : Lord, accept the worthless gift, and make it worthy through him that was slain.

We have come to sign thy book again, to write our names upon the open pages, and publicly, in the light of noontide, to proclaim ourselves sinners saved by grace. We would be living sacrifices unto God, our life would rise up into the heavens daily as an acceptable incense. Lord, what are those impulses and desires of ours, but inspirations of the Holy Ghost? Herein do we feel the might gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit. These impulses are thy creation, these prayers come out of thine own wisdom, and this uplifting of the soul is the marvel of thy power.

Save us from the dust, from the trifles of time, from the vexations of earth, from seeking prizes that have no value, and grasping at that which perishes in the hand. Enable us to covet the true riches ; may we be misers in the sanctuary, treasuring up all thou dost give, and loving it, and often counting it, and making ourselves wealthy because of thy daily revelation and grace. Enable us to turn our back upon the yesterdays that were poor and mean, and to set ourselves with glad faces and new

desires towards the unborn time ; inspired by the Holy Ghost, anointed daily with an unction from heaven, made clean by the blood which alone can cleanse, may the time to come be more profitable than the time that is gone, in all holiness of heart, consecration of spirit, and industry of hands.

We commend one another to thy benediction ; great Father, give us a sense of fellowship in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, give us keen and clear insight into the holy mysteries of thy book and into the unwritten law of thy universe. Graciously help us to understand ourselves, our greatness, our littleness, thy purpose concerning us, the subtlety of temptation, the might of the enemy, the inexhaustibility of thy resource, and thus may we walk soberly, wisely, with all watchfulness of mind and heart, so that, come when thou mayest, we may be found ready.

Thou knowest what we are and what we need ; what we pine for most and what we love the best. Thou knowest what is right for us, whether it be better to be on the hill-top, amid all the healthy wind, or to be down in the valley, suffering, crushed, hopeless. Where thou wilt, there it is best for us to be, and give us the peace of resignation where we cannot have the joy of triumph.

Regard the old and the young, the withered, and those who are in the vernal freshness of their beauty and youth. The busy man forget not, but remind him of the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity. The sick at heart, the ill at ease, do thou comfort with the hidden balm of heaven, wherewith thou hast comforted the saints of every age and made glad the holy men of every time—it is not exhausted, it is like thyself, without measure, without end. Do thou therefore bring from the hidden sanctuary the solaces so rich and tender, which the heart needs every day, and comfort those who trust in thee with the consolations of God.

Where thou hast smitten with heavy blows, thou wilt recover with great redemption and tenderness ; where the darkness has been intolerable, thou wilt set a great wealth of light, and in the shining thereof the darkness shall be forgotten.

We commend to thee this day all who suffer personal loss, family bereavement, or national desolation. Let the mercy and the pity of the God of men and families and nations be not repelled from those who are in great sorrow. Magnify thyself in the darkness, let thy grace be greater than all human want, and may souls buried in the depths of night know how true it is that light is greater than all darkness.

Now that we set ourselves to our worship and to our study of thy book, looking behind we bless thee for all thy care and love and pity and sustenance, and looking before we commit ourselves lovingly, hopefully, to thy wisdom and thy power. Sanctify this reunion, re-establish our confidence in one another, cause our love to burn with a steadier glow, comfort us in all immediate distress or prospective trouble, and when the twilight shall come, and the eventide, and the farewell, may they all come, not

in wrath but in mercy. At eventide may there be light, and may the night of earth be the beginning of the day of heaven. Amen.

### Matthew xxvii. 1-19.

1. When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel (held a council) against Jesus to put him to death :
2. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor (the Procurator of Judea).
3. Then Judas, which had betrayed (the Greek participle is in the present tense) him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented (Greek—a simple change of feeling) himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
4. Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood  
And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.
5. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple (the part of it known as "the sanctuary,"—the money was thrown into the Holy Place), and departed, and went and hanged himself.
6. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury (Corban, or sacred treasure chest), because it is the price of blood.
7. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field (the type of the unseen Gehenna), to bury strangers in.
8. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.
9. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value ;
10. And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.
11. And Jesus stood before the governor : and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.
12. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.
13. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?
14. And he answered him to never a word ; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.
15. Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people (a common incident in a Latin feast in honour of the gods) a prisoner, whom they would.
16. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.
17. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?
18. For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.
19. When he was set down on the judgment seat (the chair of judg-

ment, which was placed on a mosaic pavement), his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man : for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

### CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.

“ **W**HEN the morning was come.” Was ever *morning* invited to look upon so ghastly a spectacle ? Morn and death ! There is a grim irony in this conjunction of terms. God sends a fair day upon the earth, and we besoul the very dew that glistens upon the heavenly gift. We rise from sleep as men skilled in evil, and begin at once, with practised hands, to rub out the commandments written upon the rocks, and to pervert every promise hidden in the sweet flowers. We begin *soon* : we might have spent some little time in hesitation, but we are apt scholars in the school of evil ; we soon cease to be scholars and become *teachers*. The morning that once had in it some gladness for us, and some hint of veneration and religiousness, and that came to us as a revelation, and a lifting up of the heart, now comes a new chance to serve the devil. What I say unto one, I say unto all, “ Watch.”

Judas went by *night* to seek the Lord. It was better. There was a kind of remnant of religion about the traitor when he chose the *night* for his villainy. He was not quite so bad as he might have been : he waited till torch-time. The chief priests and elders seized the *morning*—thus the *whole* day has been stained through and through with wickedness, the morning, the night, the shining of the sun and the trembling of the stars, the whole circle of the day has not had one degree of it left without taint of blasphemy and evil.

There are no *particular* times for sinning. If you *want* a chance it will come. Thus a God of pity has to take up *every day* like a spoiled thing, and baptize it and regenerate it and send it upon the earth as a new morning to us. But he never fails to do this. He giveth more grace, he will not cast us off for ever, he will yet rub out the evil of the day and of the night, and he will save us if he can. If lost, we shall be *suicides* : there shall be no imprint of the fingers of *God* upon us as having thrust us out, when we find ourselves in utter darkness. He lives to *save* !

The chief priests and elders held a council against Jesus to put him to death. They are *still* holding it : that council never *rises*.

Until Christ be killed and utterly slain, the chief priests and elders of history will have no peace—no *priest* can live peacefully on the same earth with Christ ; he came to put down the priest, to destroy the elder, to abolish self-conceit, self-centring, self-sufficiency, and to reduce men to such a sense of sin and moral humiliation and personal guilt as would excite the cry in every heart, “God be merciful unto me a sinner.” Jesus Christ is *still* bound, and is being led away to Pontius Pilate every morning, and is being crucified at high noon every day. Every third day, thank God, he stands up again, still there, still ready to teach, and still mighty to save. Disabuse yourselves of the foolish notion that this transaction occurred once for all. Any transaction that can occur once for all is a trifle. These are the solemn realities of history : they are continually repeating, and amidst those solemn realities there is none so stern, so grand, so tender, and so beneficent, as this whole transaction relative to the arrest, the trial, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of him whom we publicly and loyally call *LORD*.

Our purpose in these studies, however, has been to find out how Christ deported himself under all the circumstances which from time to time gathered around him and constituted the story of the passing day. We have therefore only to do with these facts in their peculiar relation to the central Figure. The one question which we have to ask, and if possible to answer, is—How did Jesus Christ deport himself in these tragical circumstances ?

He so acted as to rouse to very madness the conscience of the man who had betrayed him. Judas was appalled by the issue. No man can betray Christ without first betraying *himself*. Understand that. No man can give *Christ* away, or sell him, or play foully with any of the great verities of the sanctuary, without having first betrayed and sold and damned *himself*. These are not the actions of the hand, done for the moment, set down and forgotten as accidents of the transient day ; you could never have spoken a word against the sanctuary, its Lord, its light and its revelation, until something had taken place in *your own heart*.

amounting to *self-betrayal*. The villainy is in the *heart* before it is in the *hand*. Not only does all history elucidate this, but much of our personal experience and observation goes to confirm it. Who has ever known a man play falsely with the balances of the sanctuary, with the light and spirit and truth of the holy place, who did not at some time—quickly it may be—afterward show that before he did so there had been a tremendous collapse in his *own heart*? Then he sought for excuses, then he would mortgage the future, then he would so lay his lines that they might be useful to him on the occasion which he too vividly fore-saw. And they who look but with the eyes of the body only, and do not read moral mysteries and penetrate into spiritual secrets, are bewildered or misled, or are for the moment shocked into undeserved pity for the man who, having dug the pit, fell into it, instead of being allowed to bring others whose ruin he had contemplated into the tremendous catastrophe.

Judas *always* reveals himself. He never was so revealed to himself as when Christ acted as he did immediately after the betrayal. If Jesus Christ had taken any other course than the one which he then adopted, he would have *justified* the spirit and the policy of Judas Iscariot. Search into Christ's method of meeting the circumstances, and you will find here, as everywhere, the ineffable wisdom that is always at peace with itself, so complete in its range, and in its purpose, that it cannot be ruffled, and can never know the torment of vital disquiet. Jesus Christ will utter no *words* about Iscariot, but he will so conduct himself as to show Iscariot in his true light. This is his method of judgment with us all : he enters into no wordy controversy, he does not bandy terms with us, or set himself into weaving elaborate accusations : he so orders his *providence*, the whole method of his economy, as to bring out of us *the reality of our soul*.

Suppose Jesus Christ had betaken himself to *personal resentment*. Judas would have stood *justified* before the public, he would have been credited with the insight that this man only needed to be brought into certain circumstances to *reveal* the evil quality that lurked within him. But there was no anger,—anger, a sputter for a moment, an indignity inflicted upon the man who is himself angry ! There was the appalling quietness which makes criminal men *afraid*. To speak to one who will not answer—

*why* that silence? a fit of madness, a lull before the storm, a secret which tabernacles the very God of heaven himself! *Why* that persistent speechlessness? The man is thrown upon himself: he has to find the explanation *in his own heart*, he has to be forced to the conclusion that he has *done* something for whose accusation and impeachment there is nothing in human language to touch the tremendous matter.

Suppose Jesus Christ had proclaimed himself King of the Jews, in the vulgar sense which the disciples had conceived and acted upon so long—Judas would have stood *justified*: he would be hailed as the second man in the empire; *his* the crafty-headedness that forced the proclamation—*his* the high and subtle statesmanship that saw the hour had come for the coronation of the king! But there was no such proclamation: to Pilate's courteous question there was a courteous reply which carried with it a deeper mystery than it answered. What could be thought of a Man who to Pilate's inquiry “Art thou a king?” said to Pilate himself, “Thou sayest.” An unexpected echo, a question turned into a confirmation, an enquiry made the starting-point of thought and a new set of actions!

Thus he answers our questions as if we ourselves had answered them, and thus he replies to our prayers as if we ourselves had uttered and answered both.

Suppose Jesus Christ had betaken himself to *recantation*. Seeing that the chief priests and elders of the people were really in earnest, and that death was meant, suppose that he had hung his head and said, “I have been wrong all this time and presumed upon your ignorance: I have cast myself upon the well-known credulity of the world, I have acted with the highest-handed empiricism ever attempted in all the history of time—now seeing anger in your faces and malice in your eyes, believing that you are about to cut me in twain and to pour out my blood upon the earth, pity me and forgive me.” Judas would have stood *justified*: he was the man who had brought to a proper issue the most monstrous imposture that ever appalled the human imagination!

The man who betrayed Jesus actually gave him the highest compliment ever offered to his sacred name. What said Judas? “Innocent blood.” *He* said it who had spent days and nights in the company of the accused Man; *he* said it who had heard the

very whispers of the heart which he had sold ; *he* said it who had followed him night and day, week and month, year and year, and who knew all there was to be known ; and looking upon the whole circle of the wondrous life, among his last words were, “ It is INNOCENT BLOOD.” Had there been a flaw in that character *Judas* would have known it : had there been any temporizing or cunning arrangement of policy or expressed purpose in the most concealing whispers, *Judas* would have been well acquainted with the whole circumstances. If he could have gone back upon the three years’ story and what had been done, *that* was his time for the relation of scandalous anecdote or suspicious circumstance ; standing there—himself to die before the Man he had offered to death—he said, “ INNOCENT BLOOD.”

So say we all, when we come to our true consciousness ; we will not blame God’s providence or God’s way of conducting and developing life—we will vindicate his course, though in doing so we should write in bolder characters our own condemnation. Let God be just, and every man unjust before him ; let God be true, and every man a liar. It may suit us for momentary purposes to seek to cast reflections upon the divine providence, but when we come to see the reality of things we shall say, “ Innocent God, innocent blood, innocent sanctuary—the evil is in *myself* only.”

Jesus Christ so acted as to call forth the real quality of the men who hated him. Outwardly he left them to themselves, but inwardly he plagued their hearts as with stings and torments of hell. He would give them no hold upon him : he gathered himself so intensely into himself that they could nowhere grasp the victim they would kill. This silence was meant as a judgment. This was a controversy not to be settled by the noise of anger or the sharpness of intellectual defence : it went down to the very heart of things, and carried before it the destiny of the whole world. He showed that the men who undertook to slay him knew exactly what they were doing ; he made them say it in plain words, and those plain words are, “ *It is the price of blood.*”

He *forces* us into speech : he who can be so silent can make *us* so talkative ! Men must be driven to say in *plain words* what they have been doing : there must be no making of haste over the matter, but a deliberation which brings out every accent and gives

it ample scope to ring itself into the hearing of the soul and of the world, every man must state his own case and make plain his own sin.

*They* would call the field “a place to bury strangers in,” but *the common people* would not be misled by any such euphemism—hence it was called “the field of blood.” Trust the instincts of a great people for knowing how to name things rightly. The priests and the elders label them with fine terms, cunning men seek for classical terms in which to hide the iniquity of their lives, but there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding, and though the priests and elders might morning after morning call it “a place to bury strangers in,” an act of beneficence, the great heart of the nation said, “Aceldama, blood-bought, blood-soaked, the field of blood !”

Until we name things properly, we cannot deal reformatively with them in any deep sense. Do not seek a great word to describe your course in life, use the little word—SIN. Let no man delude you by using long terms, empty polysyllables, in the sounding of which you lose the consciousness of your guilt, but say with plainness that cannot be misunderstood, “God be merciful unto me a SINNER.”

The men who were in charge of this base business paid no heed to the pain and sorrow of Judas. When he made his confession they said, “What is that to us? See thou to that.” The bad man can co-operate only up to a given point : his policy always breaks itself up. What, would you *trust* a bad man ? He will watch you, balance you, value you, drain you dry, study your character—and when he has brought you either to the extreme of remorse or to the humiliation of destitution, he will say to you, “See thou to that.” There is no duration in evil, there is no health in wickedness, there is no honour in the bad heart. Will you trust men who tell lies to you, will you trust men who can sell innocent blood ? They will leave you to yourselves one day. “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not ; if they say, Let us lurk privily for blood, let us have one purse, let us enter into a compact—O my son, consent thou not ; they will rob thee, ruin thee, mock thee, disown thee, and send thee out to a felon’s rope.”

Jesus Christ *developed the wickedness of the world*. As the light shows all things, so the life of Christ showed human nature exactly

as it was. But for this life of Christ we never should have known what human nature is, in reality. We should have seen it in parts and sections and aspects, but its inner self, its essential quality, we never could have known.

Jesus Christ allowed these men to lie to the top of their bent. Pilate himself listening, wonder-struck, said, "How many things they witness against thee!" They who did not know him, they who read only the outside, they who were eavesdroppers and not allowed to go into the inner sanctuary, they who were fertile in falsehood—how many things they witnessed against him! But the man who had come from the *inside*, with the odour of sanctity not quite exhausted, said, "*Innocent blood.*" They dropped the word "*innocent,*" and kept the word "*blood.*" Jesus Christ allowed them to go to the full length of their tether, to show how base was their criminality, how mean their purpose, and how little they deserved the titles they wore.

So he does with us. He strips every man of unworthy garments, and forces every man to a confession and a revelation of his *real quality*. He is set for the fall and the rising of many. Judging ourselves by ourselves, we pronounce upon ourselves condemnation, and confer upon ourselves dying honours, but standing in the sanctuary, weighed in the balances divine, coming near to the Son of God, we can only say, if we speak the true word, "I abhor myself in dust and ashes."

What mystery and embarrassment Christ created in those circumstances! Pilate did not know what to make of him. No such case had ever come before him. What he heard by the ear was contradicted by what he heard in the spirit. He listened to witnesses against the Man, and all the while there was a spirit talking to his heart saying, "They are liars, do not heed them." They made out a fine case, and a Spirit said to his heart, "This is envy." "Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him." And envy is a thing that cannot be legislated about. No man knows where it *begins*, where it *operates*, where it *ends*. It taints the speech, it perverts the spirit, it gives a twist to the look, it writes its base signature upon every feature of the countenance. There is no law for it, there is no whip made for the scourging of the envious man : he must be left to those subtle ministries of

Providence which bring the jealous to the ground and torment the envious with intolerable pain.

Pilate's wife had a dream by day. If the chief priests and elders were busy in the morning, so the great God, watching over all, sent a day-dream upon a good woman. We lock up our dreams and make them night-visitants. God sends them at noon, closes the eye and makes an angel talk to us, shuts out the vulgar, visible world, and makes to pass before the mystical eyes of the soul a panorama of his purpose and meaning, and we come out of that trance with a new world swinging before our bewildered gaze. A dream is a lens through which we see into the bigger spaces and the ampler worlds. God speaks in visions of the night, in sudden appearances and disappearances, in marvellous contortions of circumstances which we had pronounced ordinary and regular.

Do not try to make your world *less*, try to make it *bigger*. There be those, indeed, victims of superstition, who have multiplied dreams of their own making, and brought the dream-part of our life into contempt; but God has used the dream, through every age of human history, and the vision of the night, singular circumstances, and flapping of wings in the air without any visible figure—and out of these have come strange issues and often beneficent endings. I will not therefore throw away any opportunity which history has given me of enlarging my outlook, and feeling that the world is bigger than that blue line that lies on the hills yonder, and which men call the horizon.

Mysterious Christ—saying *nothing*, yet speaking all the time: looking other people into speech, and maddening them by an unaccountable dumbness, making them play the fool because he will be no party to their base transactions. Rather be at peace than at war with such a man! Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace, or he will bruise thee! No man can get the better in battle of this Christ. He goes down that he may come up again with a fuller power. They who come out against him in battle are left dead upon the field of their choice. If this stone shall fall upon any man it will grind him to powder—if we fall upon it, in penitence and contrition and religious hopefulness, we shall be

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broken, but it will be the breaking which is the beginning and the seal of true and eternal healing. To this Christ I call all men. Why lift the little fist against him to have it bruised? Many there be who have struck at Christ, but he has wounded them to their destruction. Let us go to him, pray to him, confess everything to him, and there is room in that great heart of his for every one of us!

## XCII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to thee through the crucified One as through the only way by which we can find access to thy throne. We stand by the cross, and as we look up into the eyes of the dying Sufferer, our sin finds out all the meaning of his great work. He was delivered for our offences, he was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him. By his stripes are we healed. We know not all the mystery of this love : it is enough for us to know that it was love. God is love, infinite love : we need it all : we sin every day, and every day we need the cross. Blessed be thy name, the cross stands through all the light and through all the darkness ; the night and the day are the same to it, for thy mercy endureth for ever. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. Thy grace is greater than the law,—taking it up and causing it to be swallowed up in that which is greater than itself. We are saved by grace, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God—the grace, the favour, the mercy of God. In this grace we stand, by it we are saved, and in it is the secret of our hope, and the security of our being is in it also. Thou dost give more grace, thou dost give grace upon grace, till we are filled with thy love and made holy by thy presence.

We have come to worship thee in hymns and psalms and loud thanksgivings, for thy tender mercies are over all thy works, and the morning brings us a new revelation of thy lovingkindness. Thy faithfulness is as a great rock, and thy mercy as a boundless sea, and thy wisdom and thy love like a great shining heaven. We run into thine house and find security there. This is the day the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. Recall to our memory, we humbly pray thee, all that is best, purest, tenderest in our recollection, and make our memory glow as it brings before its review thy wonderful tokens of patience and regard and love. May we omit nothing of the great sum ; thou hast left no moment unbaptized : in every moment hast thou hidden some drop of thy dew. O thou who givest always, give us thy very self to reign in our hearts.

As for thy word, it is sweeter to us than honey, yea than the honeycomb ; we found thy word and we did eat it ; we sighed for some token from heaven, and behold we found it in the written word, full of light and love and redeeming messages, filled from end to end with the majesty and

tenderness of the cross. We would live upon thy word as upon bread sent down from heaven; it would be unto us bread which the world knoweth not of, a light at midnight, a song in the storm, an angel always in the house. Grant us an inspiring spirit to read the inspired word—so shall we go beyond the letter and find out all the mystery of the music and all the blessedness of the eternal love.

What we are thou knowest, and what we would be none but thyself can tell. We are here for a few days, most of the time as a cloud overhead, and we see nothing but the great gloom. We struggle and wonder, we pray and blaspheme, we read thy word and forget it, and in the midst of all the rush of life thou dost lay us down in our last sleep. Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. O that we were wise, that we would consider our latter end. Lord, teach us the number of our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we be amongst those servants who shall be found waiting when their Lord cometh, having in their hearts a great expectancy, a noble and inextinguishable hope.

Look upon us now as needy suppliants at thy throne—needing light, grace, forgiveness, uplifting of heart, rekindling of all that is best which is of thine own creation. Thou wilt not spare any blessing which thy needy children ask at thy hands. When thou hast given all, then forgive—hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, forgive. May the power of the cross, its holy blood and great sacrifice, be realized in our consciousness of individual and complete pardon.

Grant to each of thy people what each most needs—guidance through the immediate perplexity, release from the day's embarrassment, an answer to the difficulty of the immediate time, solace under the deep wound which has touched the heart. Cover up our graves with flowers, make our bed in our affliction, lift up the weak in thine arms and give them rest and renewal of strength, and lead us all the way through to the very end, till we languish into life. Amen.

### Matthew xxvii. 20-54.

20. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

22. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified (the *first* direct intimation of the mode of death).

23. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands (Deut. xxi. 6)

before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it.

25. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. (Madly inverting the law, Deut. xxi. 8.)

26. Then released he Barabbas unto them : and when he had scourged (*flagellum* : the Roman punishment with knotted thongs of leather) Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

27. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall (the *Prætorium*), and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers (the cohort, or subdivision of a legion).

28. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. (Probably some cast-off cloak of Pilate's own.)

29. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand (representing the sceptre used symbolically both in the Republic and the Empire) : and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews !

30. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

31. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name (Mark mentions him as the father of Alexander and Rufus), him they compelled to bear his cross.

33. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha (nigh unto the city, John xix. 20), that is to say, a place of a skull,

34. They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall (wine mingled with myrrh, meant to dull the sufferer's pain), and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

35. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

36. And sitting down they watched him there ;

37. And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS (the *titulus*, or bill, or placard).

38. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

40. And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42. He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43. He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of God.

44. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

45. Now from the sixth hour (the place of execution was reached about 9 a.m.) there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? (to the Roman soldiers and the Hellenistic Jews unintelligible), that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias (probably a wilful perversion).

48. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

49. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ;

52. And the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53. And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

## THE CRUCIFIXION.

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ARABBAS or Jesus.” That is the question, *to-day*, that question *never* changes. Our choice is not between things *similar*, but between things exactly and irreconcilably *opposite*. This does not always appear to be the case, but it is so in reality. We have shaded things now so much into one another that we delude ourselves with the notion that the distance between one action and another is merely nominal. We must get rid of that sophism, if we would begin the real work of life. There are but *two spirits* in the universe, both present at the opening of human history, and they rule the world *to-day*. Those spirits are good and evil, God and the devil, the pure and the impure, the heavenly and the infernal. To one or other of these we belong.

Yet we may not *appear* to belong to either of them *decisively*. In our motive and purpose we may be the very elect of God, whilst we are apparently the children of wrath. We are what we

would be if we could. Our character is not in the broken deed, the unsaintly word, the passing temper : our character is in our *heart of hearts*, our secret *motive*, our supreme purpose. Herein are men misjudged, both on the one side and the other ; herein has been found a considerable difficulty in the reading of the Bible itself to some, for they know not how a man can be said to be a man after God's own heart, when he has done thus and so—actions evidently contrary to the spirit of holiness and of justice. How can Peter be a disciple of Christ, when he has sworn with an oath that he knew not the man ? Surely there must be some other standard of judgment by which we make our mistakes, for we make no true judgments. I find rest in the doctrine that we are in reality, all appearances to the contrary, what we really would be, in our holiest prayers and in our highest inspirations. If we can say, “ Lord, thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love thee,” though ten thousand accusing voices ring from the very caverns of hell itself in impeachment of our life, God will know how to esteem us.

The doctrine holds good on the other side. We are not to be judged by our *occasional goodnesses*, our fits of charity, our studied actions of beneficence. We cannot pay the mighty debt of accusation which the law brings against us. Thrust we our hand never so deep into our resources, there is nothing in those resources themselves to answer the mighty claim. So let us be just on the one side as on the other. I do not value the momentary sigh, the mere cry of a calculating penitence, which is sorry for the *result* rather than for the *sin*. I must be understood as speaking to *reality*, to *essences*, to the very *vitalities* of things, and as holding the candle of the Lord over the thoughts and reins of the heart.

Is not some such word of cheering necessary to recover us from the leprosy of despair ? We get into the way of adding up what we have done, and complaining of the little sum. There is a sense in which such action is perfectly proper—but what is your *spirit*, what is your supreme *desire* ? Stripping yourselves of all commendation, false refuges, mistaken trusts, and fanciful conceptions of life, what is it that you really *wish to be* ? If hidden in God's sanctuary, shut up with God face to face, you can truly say, “ Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love

thee : God be merciful unto me a sinner," then who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ?" It is Christ that died—who is he that shall rub out the record of his sacrifice and blood ? Stand in the temple of these infinite securities and let no man take thy crown.

" The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus." The chief priests and elders are doing the same thing *to-day*. The priest is always a bad man ; if he be not *more* than a priest, he is the *worst* of men. This was the irreligiousness of religion. Religion has done the very worst things that ever were done in human history. We must get rid of his word " religion" in some of the senses in which it is so often mistakenly and mischievously employed. Religion lay at the bottom of the original FALL. Eve never could have been deceived by anything but *religion*. It was along the *religious instinct* she was approached, it was through the religious instinct she was destroyed. What said the tempter ? " Ye shall be as *gods*."

That is the sophism which underlies the subtlest temptations which assail our life : to be as *gods*,—to break through the boundary line, to commit the final trespass, to include all things within the circle of our thought and movement ! Religion may describe a merely outward attitude, religion may be nothing but a Latin name : what we want is. . . . *Godliness*. God is a Spirit.

We want an essential quality, a vital spirit, a holy inspiration. Religion may be *irreligious*, but godliness can never be less than divine.

In all the imprecatory psalms we have nothing but the *irreligiousness of religion* ; religion pressed beyond its proper province ; a partial and imperfect righteousness, a little and mean righteousness which thinks itself virtuous because it would bring down fire upon the vices of *other* people. The great righteousness is *love*. O that we could learn that lesson ! then should we get rid of all censoriousness and cynicism, and all mutual criticism, and men would be silent where they are now noisy as to one another's faults. The imperfect man, the Old Testament saint, the man who thinks that righteousness consists in perpetual visitation of

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justice upon the head of the offender, is an *irreligious religionist*. He who sees righteousness rising in infinite glory into *love*, and shedding from its boundless firmament the dews of pity, upon a sinning world—he touches the very heart of Christ ! Truly I know not where religion would lead some men ; it makes them angry, sour, cynical, and foolish, and invests them with a power of doing incalculable mischief in the family and in the church.

The action of Pilate is described with infinite naturalness. There be many who condemn Pilate and laugh at him. I cannot join the unholy contempt. Pilate could have done nothing else. He has been condemned for vacillation by men who have not transformed themselves into his personality and made themselves reel under the tremendous pressure of the tumult which surged around him. He has been to them but a figure on a page ; they have approached him with cold criticism ; they have condemned where they should have *sympathised* and pitied. I honor Pilate. He was in a difficult position—he was not master : he suggested reasons and methods, which if accepted would have tended towards pity, release, and even justice of the noblest kind. But whilst I speak this word for the *historical man* Pilate, I have nothing but condemnation for *modern Pilatism*. Always distinguish between the historical *man* and the *principle* which has been modernized and named in his name. *Cain* is dead—*Cainism* never dies ! Pilate is no more with us in the flesh, but Pilatism is the principal influence in the church to-day. What does Pilatism do ? It *affects friendship* ; it *pays compliments* ; it *transfers responsibility* ; it wants to be on *both sides* ; it speaks a word and then does a contradictory deed ; it washes its hands and shuts its eyes to the great murders of the times. It accepts a *ritual*, it avoids a *discipline*.

How far are *we* ourselves the subjects of this condemnation ? Where is the honest follower of Christ ? Not the blatant follower, but the steady, constant, loyal, loving follower whose life is a gospel written in the largest characters, and whose speech is eloquent with the messages of the cross itself ? In what relation do we stand to modern controversies ? Men are surging around Christ now who want to crucify him again on a literary cross, or a cross that is critical. How do we stand in relation to them—

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are we firm, clear, simple, not with the firmness of bigotry, not with the simplicity of ignorance, but with the steadiness of loving gratitude to Christ for every revelation of wisdom and every hope of redemption? Let the church be steady and it will become the centre of peace in a tumultuous world. The peaceful man brings peace into every scene.

The people answered Pilate with this great cry, "His blood be on us and on our children,"—a prayer with an *unconscious* meaning, a vulgarity with a sanctuary enclosing it! It is marvellous how many persons have uttered words with *unconscious meanings*, and how some of the greatest testimonies have come from men who did not know that they were uttering them. Take the case of Caiaphas, for example: he gave counsel to the Jews that it was "expedient that one man should die for the people": he did not know what he was saying, yet in that saying he uttered the very gospel of eternity. We cannot tell how far our words go and what they really do in the world, and what great meanings will be attached to words which we spoke with more or less of thoughtlessness or with more or less of merely local contraction and application.

How noble an eulogium might be wrought out by skilful eloquence out of the testimony of outsiders and enemies! I ask for no other testimonial to the spirit and character of Christ, and to the effect of his spirit and character, than that which has been *unconsciously* given by those who were *outsiders*, or who were supposed to be personal *enemies*. What said Judas? "Innocent blood." What said Pilate's wife? "Just person." What said the centurion amid all the darkness and terrible phenomena of the last hour—the Roman centurion, a participator in the great guilt? At the close of all he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God." These are not the testimonies of personal allies or sworn supporters. Judas and Pilate and Pilate's wife and the centurion concur in writing under the name of Christ a testimony which is sufficient of itself to confirm his claim and to lift his character above all just suspicion. "He maketh the wrath of men to praise him, he drags the enemy at his chariot wheels." It is one of two things, a hearty, spontaneous, cordial union in the mighty anthem which bears his name above every name in its thunders of praise,

or a reluctant testimony forced out of unwilling lips, but still tending in the direction of the lofty and immortal song.

Now we come to the last scene of all. Hear these words, “ He delivered him to be crucified.” The law that would find no fault in him was like an iron gate crushed down by an angry mob—the gate of law gave way, the last barrier fell, and the powers of darkness were triumphant. Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified. If wolves can be glad when they fasten their gleaming teeth in the flesh of their prey, then were those men glad when they laid their cruel hands on the unresisting Christ. From him there was no cry of pain, in him there was no shudder of mortal fear—he had died some time before, the bitterness of death was past, he had accomplished his sorrow, in all its higher aspects, in Gethsemane. Now he is “ led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” They could not touch him ; they could tear down the *house* in which he lived, but *himself* was beyond the cruel act !

See the ingenuity of cruelty : see what hell can do at its best. Let us realize the scene so far as we know it. Let Christ be the central figure of our assembly ; closing our eyes, as it were, let us look upon him with the inner vision and see what actually took place. They stripped him, they plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon him, they put a reed in his right hand, they mocked him, they spat upon him, they took the reed out of his hand and smote him on the head—they led him away to crucify him. The ingenuity of hell could go no further. They stripped *him* who said, “ If thine enemy take thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” He who *preached* the great sermon *lived it* in every throb of its infinite passion. They plaited a crown of thorns for *him* who said, “ My kingdom is not of this world.” They mocked *him* who said, “ Our Father, which art in heaven.” They spat on *him* who kept the door open for the prodigal and would not begin the feast till the wanderer came back. They smote *him* on the head who never had one thought or wish but for the public good. They led *him* away to be crucified who never harmed a single living thing ! The evil powers triumphed. When he hung upon the cross they said, “ He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him. They that passed by wagged their heads and railed on him. The thieves also

which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth." And he, as if confirming the very triumph of hell, said with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani,—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There was darkness over the whole land—the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened, and the God-forsaken Sufferer hung there—the Victim without a friend, the Saviour of many without a voice to defend his fame!

O thou great hell, take the victory. Spirit of evil, damned from all eternity, mount the central cross and mock the dead as thou hast mocked the living! The night is dark enough—no such night ever settled upon the earth before. Will the light ever come again—is the sun clean gone for ever—will the blue sky ever more kiss the green earth? All the birds are dead, their music is choked; the angels have fled away and the morning stars have dropped their sweet hymn. This is chaos with an added darkness. What is happening?

May be God and Christ are communing in the secret places away beyond the mountains of night—may be that this *murder* will become the world's *Sacrifice*—may be that out of this blasphemy will come a Gospel for every creature. It cannot end where it is—that cannot be the end of all! What will come next? We must wait.

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## NOTES.

"*And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!*" Did not the thorns come of the curse? "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; . . . . thorns shall it bring forth.*" Did he not, in the fullest sense, bear the curse for us? They put a reed in his right hand,—do not all insincere professors do the same? Partial sovereignty, often merely nominal sovereignty, is given to Jesus Christ even by those who avow his religion. The soldiers knelt before their victim in an attitude of mock worship; this, even more than crucifixion, is the uttermost depth of depravity; crucifixion may be a legal act, but mockery is the refinement of cruelty.

"*And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*" Truly, it was the hour and power of darkness. The *spiritual* temptation

having failed, the lower instrument of physical torture is employed without mercy. The soul was untouched,—why fear them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do? They smote him on the head—or into the head, *εἰς κεφαλὴν*, drove the thorns into his head with bats and blows.”—(TRAPP).

“ *They compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear his cross.*” The writer just quoted well says: “ Not so much to ease Christ, who fainted under the burden, as to hasten the execution and to keep him alive till he came to it. Truly the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel! “ They gave him vinegar—cold comfort to a dying man; but they did it in derision, *q.d.*, Thou art a King, and must have generous wines. Here’s for thee, therefore.”

## XCIII.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, how wonderful is thy way in light and in love. We cannot follow all thy going, but thou hast so wrought in us by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that we can wholly trust thy love, and be assured that thy way is light, though it be in the whirlwind, and the clouds be the dust of thy feet. Thou dost rise above us as the heaven is higher than the earth, yet thine eye is upon us for good, and thine hand is searching our life to find out where it may lay some other gift. Thou dost live to give ; thou didst so love the world as to give, and in that giving we saw thy whole heart, all the love of thine eternity, and all the grace of thine infinitude. Thou didst give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked—thy purpose is life and immortality, and bliss and service that is rest, and expectation that is its own fulfilment. Enable us to lay hold upon the gift of thy Son, and to make it the chief and only treasure of our life. His blood cleanseth from all sin, the great answer of his love confounds every accusation of the law, so that we say, It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ?

Enable us more and more clearly to see the cross, to feel its gracious power, to answer its pathetic appeal. May we live in Christ because Christ lives in us, and may we serve Christ because of the inspiration of his own Spirit. May the secret of our energy be in the constraining love of Christ, may the mystery of our power and our industry be found in the love of our heart for the Son of God. He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? So would we have but one care, that we have Christ in us, and that we live in Christ—then shall all things needful and good be added unto us.

We now unanimously praise thee in cordial and loving song for all thy tender care over us from the first breath until now. We are thy children : thou didst make us and not we ourselves ; we have in us thine own image and likeness, marred indeed and broken, not to be known by any eye but thine : yet still God is our Father in heaven. Thou wilt not shut the door until the prodigal returns, thou wilt welcome all who come to thee in penitence and hope and loving trust. Thou dost not turn away from the sons of men who cry unto thee contritely, thou dost further open the home-door and with broader welcomes call to those who are furthest off.

Thy mercy endureth for ever : thy mercy is a great sea, thy love is without bound or limit which we can determine. Where sin abounds grace doth much more abound, for art not thou the all-filling One, and all-ruling, putting away everything contrary to thine own holiness and causing thy wisdom to be the light and peace of creation ?

We come with our sins, but we shall not take them away again : we lay them down as a black and heavy burden at the foot of the cross. Lord, help us ; Lord, pardon us ; Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon us and say, " Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." Thou dost not forgive little by little, thou dost not pardon partially, thou dost multiply to pardon, yea, thou dost pardon with pardons, as billow rolling upon billow, until our sins are like stones which are cast into the depths of the sea.

We come with our continual prayer for light, guidance, defence, and peace which passeth understanding. We know not how few our days, but we would make them the best days of our whole life. Hence on we would have no mistake or error ; from this time forward may our life be complete in thy presence by reason of the holiness of its purpose and the sanctity of its prayer. Yet we know we shall fail, we shall be bruised again, the enemy shall yet overthrow us—yet surely thou wilt come in the end and bind us up with an eternal healing, and make us strong with immortality. We are in thine hands as we have always been ; our sin shall not separate us from thee, if so be there rise in our heart the hatred of it and the desire to be better.

We come asking for light upon thy page, holy page, divinely written, full of light and truth. Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law, give to our understanding the light that shall be as a lamp of thine own lighting, and may we see things afar off, and read with quick and sure vision all the writing of God concerning this life.

Hear any special hymn and any particular prayer now offered by those who bow before thee in morning worship. In some houses thou hast given new life, and with new life is a new song. Otherwhere thou hast put out the fire and blocked up the window into which the most light came, and made the house cold and drear. O visit thou the dwelling thus desolated, and make it glad again with some purer joy. Regard those whose life is now to them a perplexity and a wonder, not knowing how they shall spend the little remainder of their energy, and grant them unexpected answers of release and joy.

The Lord's blessing be upon us now as a worshipping people ; give us the spirit of adoration, the spirit of supplication, and the spirit of hopefulness, and work in us that sacred and vigilant desire which looks out for blessings and hails them with joy in their descent.

As for those who are not with us, they are with thee—the sick, the afflicted, the helpless, the poor who dare not venture out in the light, but who wait for the darkness that they may seek even their Father's house. The Lord remember such, and make all heaven shine upon them with

promise and blessing. Our dear ones on the water, the great abyss, voyaging homeward, with many a tender memory and many a sacred hope—the Lord himself navigate the ship and bring it to the desired haven.

Bless the stranger within our gate, the man unfamiliar with the place and institute, and give him comfort in the thought that this is his Father's house. In all our meetings and partings be thou with us, the one Light and the only joy, till we are gathered in the house that is above. Amen.

### Matthew xxvii. 55–66.

55. And many women (distinct from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” Luke xxiii. 28) were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him :

56. Among which was Mary Magdalene (the first mention of the name in Matthew), and Mary the mother of James (the *Little*) and Joses, and the mother (Salome, Mark xv. 40) of Zebedee's children.

57. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa (probably *Ramah*, the birthplace of Samuel), named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple ;

58. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

59. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

61. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

62. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

63. Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

64. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error (better *deceit*, as corresponding with deceiver, ver. 63) shall be worse than the first.

65. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

66. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (the priests took part as well as the soldiers).

## THE SAYINGS ON THE CROSS.

THESE incidents are utterly trifling as compared with what had transpired on the cross itself, as indeed all incidents, except the Resurrection, must be. Nothing can occur, so soon after the scene upon the cross, which can, compared with that tragedy, be worthy of one moment's consideration. Whilst therefore these petty details are completing themselves, let us study the inner life of Christ as revealed in some of the Sayings which he uttered from the cross in his last agony. These Sayings will admit us into the very sanctuary of his soul. You remember that he called his sermon upon the mount "These sayings of mine," —now that he is upon the higher mount, the *cross*, he utters Seven Sayings, which are really but a re-pronouncement of the first. The Sayings on the cross seem to be the solemn *peroration* of the Sayings on the mount. The great music is one. He returns, after many a wondrous and thrilling variation, to the note with which he opened the anthem. In such returns and such consonances, we find an argument for his Deity.

What said he on the cross? "Woman, behold thy son." He also said, "I thirst." Further, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Again he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And he cried, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Finally he said, "It is finished." He laid the rock when he preached the sermon on the mount: on the cross he built the infinite fabric. Without professing to settle the *order* in which the Sayings are uttered, we can have no difficulty in discovering the meaning of the revelation. After we have studied that meaning awhile, we can come to these little incidents, and gather them up and show their greater meaning.

The Sayings upon the cross surely give a complete revelation of the *humanity* of Jesus Christ. It was no dramatic personage that quivered on the cross. It is of importance to say this. The voice was *human*, the confession of need was *human*, the sense of desolation was *human*, his filial affection was *human*. All these last proofs were needed to render absolutely impossible any theory, mythical, dramatic, or imaginary in any sense. On the cross was the **MAN** Christ Jesus. The humanity of Christ made his priest-

hood *possible*. We could not have a priest in a mere Deity. Deity does not *pray*. He must be a *man*, often as weak as I am ; he must have a body as real, burning with the same fire, quivering under the same pain, answering the same great demands. He hungered, he thirsted, he slept, he rested because of weariness, he sat down on Jacob's well. Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, he took on him the seed of Abraham. Touch him, grasp him, look at him, watch him, and he is Man and Woman, male and female, the *ideal man*, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. "We have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities : he was in all points tempted like as we are."

This is the tender power of his priesthood to my soul. Peter touches the exact music of the occasion when he says, "Casting all your care upon him, for . . ." O listen to the following and completing words. How grandly the sentence would have read had it stood thus, "Casting all your care upon him, for he is *omnipotent*." That would, however, have touched but a feeble chord. Only the few can respond to *sublimity*. The sunset is wasted upon most eyes. But all hearts can answer the *sympathetic*—so the glorious sentence stands not as I have suggested it, but, "Casting all your care upon him, for HE CARETH FOR YOU." It is the *moral sublimity*, not the *intellectual magnificence*, that touches the universal heart !

Herein is the secret of the power of evangelical preaching, above all philosophical abstraction and ethical prelection. These touch but a few, but evangelical unction, sympathy, tenderness, grace, these belong to the *universal heart*, and the tone is detected as the tone of a universal speech. Be quite sure of your Lord's *humanity*. Do not allow any section of the theological church to steal *that* from you, as if it belonged to that section as a special possession. When a theologian of any school arises and says, "I believe in the *humanity* of Jesus Christ," we ought to answer, "And so do we." More fully, more pathetically, and more trustfully, we accept more from his blood than any school of theologians can accept, who doubt or hesitate concerning his divinity. A body was prepared for him : he interrupted no law of nature : whilst on the cross he said, "I thirst,"—what wonder, with his blood drained from his heart, what wonder if the peasant

*thirsted?* The wonder was that he *confessed* the thirst. But it was a wonder of *love*, a wonder of condescension, a wonder that concealed a revelation. The words “I thirst” did not indicate a merely personal accident, they revealed and confirmed a sublime doctrine and fact, namely the humanity, and the *priestly* humanity, of the suffering Son of God. He suppressed no natural instinct—“Son,” said he, “behold thy mother.” He created new relationships whilst he was sundering old ones. “Woman,” said he, “behold thy son, thy support, thy friend, thy refuge in time of bitterest loneliness and childlessness.” He set up a new household whilst the temple of his body was being torn asunder, he *made* whilst he was being *unmade*. He smothered no natural emotion; “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” uttered in a strange language, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.” Hark, is it Hebrew? is it Syriac?—what is it? They could not tell. The bystanding Jews said, “He calls for Elias.” He was always misunderstood! The Son of God calling for Elias? Always were his great magnificent words dragged down to little applications and accidental circumstances, by the mean interpreters who thronged around him, crowding him with their society, but not enlarging him with their thoughts.

These Sayings do more than reveal the complete humanity of Christ: they show the *grandeur* of his *moral nature*. I do not dwell on the tenderness of his care for his mother, but I would point to the sublimity of his *forgiveness*. It was his then to be the *great* Man, to work the *last* miracle, to mount a throne from the very head of the Cross itself. He would have his murderers forgiven! It is grander to *forgive* than to *slay*! we should have no enemies if we could really *pray* for them. They in themselves might continue to be enemies, but in our hearts there would be no sting of enmity. When did the Lord turn the captivity of Job—when he gave his most brilliant retort to his three comforters? No. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he **PRAVED** for his friends!

It is always so: it is a subtle and beneficent law in the divine revelation, and the administration of human affairs, that we get our greatest blessings in our most *religious moments*. Examine what has been done to you, analyze it, weigh it in scales of your

own making, measure it by standards of your own setting up, and then you will but aggravate the enmity which you have already deplored. But pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you, and though no answer fall upon *them*, the reply will surely enter *your own heart*, and in the sanctuary of your consciousness there will be rest, and even joy.

But I would dwell still more upon the magnificence of Christ's *religious conceptions*. He called himself "forsaken," but he did not therefore *deny* the existence of God ; he did not allow the experience of a moment to becloud and destroy the eternal realities. That is where so many of us fail. God takes away the delight of our eyes, and we therefore turn our back upon him, and deny what is infinitely of more consequence than his *existence* —we deny his *love* ! Of what avail is it to confess his existence if we deny his providence, his compassion, his mercy ? What does it amount to if we have a *theological* God, but no God gleaming in the *compassion* which bedews every morning, and shining in the light which gladdens the whole day ? Better deny his *existence* and shout blasphemous oaths into his blank heaven, than profess to acknowledge his existence and yet deny, or distrust or disown his *love* and his *claims*.

Let us read this cry of forsakenness in the light of the other Sayings, and we shall see what it meant. How many of us have taken out this dark expression and reasoned gloomily about it, instead of setting it in its right place, and allowing all the lights to shine upon it and illustrate its great sadness and mystery ? "Forsaken," yet not without *consciousness of God* : calling him "Father," committing the spirit into the Father's hands. *He* is not "forsaken" who can in the darkness say, "Father." Forsaken, yet *confident in prayer*, spending his last breath in supplication—addressing the heavens, making no appeal to the earth : sending enough *downwards* to prove his humanity, but sending *upwards* the great breadth and force of his life. "Father, receive me, Father, forgive them"—he cannot be much forsaken who can *thus* trust his spirit to the Unseen One !

Forsaken, yet *forgiving all* ; dying with the word of clemency upon his lips, anticipating and outblotting the great judgment about this solemn tragedy. He was not forsaken who thus

prayed. “ *Why* hast thou forsaken me?” ay, that is the question of the ages, and that cry was meant for our consideration rather than as an expression of his own loneliness. “ *Why* hast thou forsaken me?” Let the ages answer that inquiry! let the church ponder it! let the world renounce all smaller inquiries, and answer this infinite perplexity! It is a question *we* must answer: *God* made no reply; we must find out *why* it was that for one moment Christ was orphaned and left alone. When we come to consider this question in other relations we may find that it was part of the grand *priestly* process that Christ should feel the woe of orphanage; we shall find that this was no reflection upon his purity or his purpose, but one of the infinitely solemn secrets of the impenetrable decrees of heaven. Maybe that *sin* explained the forsakenness, that *sin* wrought out this isolation; the Lamb must stand back in terrible loneliness to receive the last shock of the very storm which he came to silence and to sanctify.

Then mark how these Sayings show Christ’s assurance of the *completion* of his work. He bowed his head and said, “ It is finished.” “ *If*”—what? The sentence relates to something beside and beyond itself. “ It is finished”—how much is signified by that meanest of the pronouns. Who can tell what visions enthralled his attention at that moment? how the eternal purpose stood before him like a tower on which the top stone had just been laid; how some immeasurable cycle of time completed itself and another cycle of vaster sweep and intenser light began its revolution. What decrees were fulfilled, what prophecies matured, what hearts enlightened, what worlds opened—none can tell. The ATONEMENT was completed, the answer to the *law* perfected, the way to the FATHER was opened, the love of God shone upon the world without a cloud to interrupt its light, and righteousness and peace kissed each other over the covenant fulfilled.

In the light of these reflections turn to the little incidents that make up the rest of this chapter, and in those incidents you find bewildered but undespairing *love*. “ Many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him.” They stood their ground, and were saying just what Christ was saying, in a sense their own. They said, “ My Jesus, my Jesus, why hast thou forsaken me?” *Had* he forsaken them?

No more than *God* had forsaken *him*. See in their loneliness some hint of the meaning of his own, “ I will come again. After three days I will rise again. Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again.” It was a *momentary* forsakenness ; it recalled an ancient prophecy—“ For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercies will I gather thee.”

Then here is what we always find in the whole Christian history, and perhaps in the individual story as well—*Help from an unexpected quarter.* “ When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple ; he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.” Help from an unexpected quarter ! the evening having a star all its own ! This star was not seen in the bright light, it shone “ when the even was come.” The evening brings us all together : morning scatters us, evening reconstitutes the household and resanctifies the home. Thank God for evening stars, for night glories, for jewellery gleaming through the darkness. We have seen some of God’s bright stars when the night settled upon our houses, but what we have seen is but a dim hint of the glory that shall be revealed.

And here also we have a *confession of human weakness.* They—the chief priests and Pharisees—remembered what the disciples had forgotten. The disciples required to be reminded of the resurrection !—“ Then remembered they the saying that he would rise again,”—but the *enemies* treasured it. Our *enemies* catch tones in our speech which our *friends* sometimes miss. Those who watch us most carefully with a view to our destruction write down in their note-books sentences which our friends hardly hear. “ Sir,” said they, “ we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.” So they would have precautions taken. *Pilate* said unto them,—I wonder with how much of irony,—“ Ye have a watch—go your way, make it as sure as ye can.” *As ye can* : go your way—wave your hands to the rising sun, and forbid him to advance. What a fool’s errand ! Go your way : seal up the *Spring*, and tell it that this year we shall have no vernal wind and no vernal blossoming. What a fool’s errand ! Go your way and tell Arcturus and his sons to shine no more, and bid the Pleiades vanish from the heavens they have illumined so long. What a fool’s errand !—but

a philosopher's undertaking *compared to sealing the tomb in which lay the Son of God.*

So shall all our enemies be disappointed, if we ourselves be right ; so all sealing and watching shall come to an ignominious end, if the thing buried be only the *body*, and not the *soul* that cannot die !

XCIV.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, if thy blessing be given unto us, we shall know no more any pain of want or any weakness of fear. Send thine angels to us to tell us what thou wouldest have us do. With the music of their message in our ears we shall run, if with fear yet with great joy, to bring thy disciples word. The word is thine, every letter and tone of it ; it is not ours else it would perish in the wind which first hears it, but it is thy word, full of the music of thine own heart, tender with the tremulousness of thine own love, and because it is thy word and none other, it shall find acceptance in the earth, and make the whole world pure and glad. Herein is our trust, here do we find the light of our hope, into this promise as into a rock do we run in the time of darkness and desperate sorrow. When thou dost try our faith, we would that our faith might be strongest ; when the cloud is darkest, we would break it up by the urgency and penetration of our vehement cry ; when the night is longest we would charm away all its darkness by continual songs of hope. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. Lord, increase our faith. Faith is the gift of God : we ask thee for it now, with loving and expectant heart.

We come to thee by the way appointed, broad as thine own love, and bright as thine own heaven—Jesus Christ, the Living Priest, by whom we have received the atonement, and because of his sacrifice and intercession we shall have all things and shall truly abound in all heavenly bestowals, and in us shall there be a daily inspiration that shall renew our strength and our hope.

We have come to bless thee with many words and many songs, to recall all thy tender mercies, though it be impossible so to do, to set our memory upon the miracle of complete recollection. Lord help us to do what we cannot do—but in the straining attempt to do it, we shall increase the strength which is mocked, and shall show thee how loving is our grateful heart.

Thou hast been with us all the day, so that we hardly know one day from another, so Sabbath has been the quietness of the whole week, so tender the suggestion of every shining hour. Yet dost thou give us special mercies amid all that is even unusual. Thou raisest up mountains, the higher the one than the other, even in the land of great hills. Thou dost send upon us unexpected joy, and if now and again thou dost

touch the foundation of our tower, it is that we may learn that if our foundation be not in God it is insecure. How terrible art thou, and yet how gentle : in wrath remember mercy, in the day of judgment look upon the bow of promise, and in all the fire of thine indignation against sin, remember how frail we are, a leaf that fadeth and a shadow that fleeth away. Enable us to work well during the hours of light, knowing that the night cometh wherein no man can work. Give us a right view of the work of thine house, may we feel that there is no slavery in thy bondage, that thy captivity is freedom, and that to be the Lord's slaves is to be the Lord's sons.

Thou knowest what our life is, shattered and torn, lying around us in many a ruin without shape or meaning ; thou knowest how our vows have been broken, and our prayers have been plucked back from heaven without answer and without pressure ; thou knowest us altogether—behold we have but a handful of days to live, do thou pity us, spare us, and work out in us all the way of thine own love. Enable us to live the larger life, to look upon the whole revelation of thy truth with the eyes of the heart, which take the whole sight, and which seeing perceive also.

Lift the burden where it is too heavy, dry the tears where they do not enlarge the vision but blind it, open for us ways upon roads that are at present inaccessible, give us a humble, heartfelt trust in our Father's goodness, and may we stand upon that as upon a rock that cannot be shaken. Go after the prodigal whom our prayers fail to overtake, bring back the wanderer who has left all the common roads of life and is groping in thickets and wildernesses which we cannot penetrate. Nurse our sick ones, lift them awhile from the hot bed and give them rest within thine arms—lay them down again with thine own gentleness, and give them sleep.

Baptize all our little ones with dew from heaven : preserve their lives that they may become good and great and wise and honourable. Watch our houses that they be not broken in upon with violence : may we find a sanctuary on the hearthstone and the beginning of heaven in the innermost joys of the house.

We say this in the dear, great, tender Name, we baptize our prayer with the blood of the cross—without that baptism what is our prayer but a speech of the lips ? Hear us at the cross, and as thou hearest come to us with assurance of perfect pardon and release from every sin and every accusation, and may we find a Sabbath within the Sabbath, the peace of nature enclosed within the larger peace of God's own calm. Amen.

### **Matthew xxviii. 1-10.**

1. In the end of the Sabbath (late on the Sabbath), as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2. And, behold, there was a great earthquake ; for the angel of the

Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow :
4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye : for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6. He is not here : for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead ; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him : lo, I have told you.

8. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy ; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. (*Rejoice !*) And they came and held (clasped) him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid : go tell my brethren (by spiritual relationship) that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

## RE-UNION.

JESUS CHRIST has for the time being withdrawn from the page we are perusing, yet we can think of nothing but himself, even during his temporary absence. After the high converse we have had, we cannot easily fall into common talk. The sleeping city is a mean sight to the man who has been out early and come down from the mountain whence he saw the sunrise. To him the sleeper seems to be almost a criminal : the sleeper is a man who has lost an opportunity and can never have that opportunity renewed under precisely the same conditions. So all the people that are now moving upon this page, up to a given verse, are commonplace, and would be intolerable but for the inquiry which strains and elevates their attention. We have no patience with them, but their inquiry makes a common standing ground for the human race. Let us join it, and ply heaven with the same eager and expectant question.

“ In the end of the Sabbath.” No ! In the end of the *Jewish* Sabbath mayhap, but not in the end of the *SABBATH*. Literally in the end of the Sabbaths, as if they had all come to a point of termination. The Sabbath is only about to *begin* ; there are no

*endings* in God's blessings—what we call the end is only the little rest which the blessing takes, to come up again in fuller bloom and tenderer colour and larger fruitfulness. Why have you this word “end” in your speech as Christians? There is an end to nothing but *sin*. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” No *beauty* is lost, no *light*, no speech of tenderness, no comfort of benediction, no inspiration of truth. The Sabbath can never end : man would take it back again if it were to be withdrawn. *Forms* may undergo changes, but the sabbatic *spirit*, the genius of rest, the elder brother of the days, the queen of the week, the shining star amid all the galaxy of time—the world would not willingly let die, the great religious heart of man can never allow to expire.

“As it began to dawn.” Yes, that is just what it did. That is the very *poetry* of the occasion ; the word written with apparent accident is the very expression of heaven. It began to dawn,—a new tender light shot up in the eastern sky, the orient trembled with a new presence, and glowed as with an infinite surprise. Christianity is always *dawning* : the Sabbath dawns over all the world ; the Sabbath day is more than half over away down in the eastern lands—in the far-away western places, men are just beginning to rise now, and when we have concluded our service they will begin to sing

“This is the day the Lord hath made.”

In the highest sense that can challenge the imagination and satisfy all the religious vision that is in us, Christianity is a continual *dawning*. When Christ comes the light comes ; when Christ shines upon the life the darkness flees away ; when the mind gets its first true conception of Christ, it is as if a shaft of light were shot from a great firmament of gloom, and as if all heaven shone. It began in the beginning. God created the heavens that dawn every day. Believe me, we live in *beginnings*. Give me some hint of *endings*, and strength goes, inspiration expires, and energy says, “There is no longer use for me to unfurl the banner, or blow the trumpet’s bray in the ear of the dead. Let me lie down and die too.” There is a *joyousness* about the *dawn* and the beginning, the stirring tune, the hour of *activity*, when every

energy leaps to the front, and every power says, “Baptize me for thy service, and may I be crowned as a blessing in the world’s commonwealth.”

“As it began to dawn towards the first day.” That also is just what it did! Now the primacy of *time* is covered with the higher primacy of *grace*. The “first day” it had always been since time was broken up into weeks and months and years. For many a long century it had been the first day of the week as it were by nativity—but now it is born again. It was sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it was sown a little glint of time, it rises big with eternal splendour. So may we be born again. You are first in *intellect*,—would that you were also first in *goodness*. And you are first in *energy*,—would that you were also first in *prayer*. You in the third place are first in *wealth*—would God every golden piece you have were made more golden still by being transformed into the gold of the sanctuary. Be not satisfied with natural or hereditary primacies; over those you have next to no control, it may be; but in this primacy of *goodness*, where may elevation cease? There is no terminal point on that heaven-ascending line.

The women came to the sepulchre, and Luke gives us some additional and illustrative particulars about them and their coming. According to Luke’s account, the women came, “bringing the spices which they had prepared.” Notwithstanding they had been distinctly told that Jesus Christ would rise again on the third day, with that singular obstinacy which distinguishes the prejudices of the human mind, those blessed and affectionate women came with their spices to embalm their Lord! How can you account for the stubbornness of this view of death? The women had been told, and told by Jesus Christ himself, that on the third day he would rise again, and yet so treacherous is the memory, or so irreligious the heart, that Sight staggers Faith. The women *saw* him die; any recollection of a promise of “rising again” must have died in that death. So forgetting the prediction, or regarding it as a sentiment that had perished, or otherwise viewing it as a hope rather than as a fact which lay within the possibility of accomplishment, they came “bringing their spices which they had prepared.”

The angel chided them. Said the angel to them, “Remember

how he spake," and "they remembered his words," but the remembrance of his words would have been of no avail to them two hours before they saw the angel. If they had found the stone at the door of the sepulchre they would have remembered no such words—but Sight now helped Faith. The grave was empty, the stone rolled away, celestial visitants were the attendants of that gloomy place, and out of the depths of death they heard the voice of Resurrection ;—"then they remembered his words." That remembrance is all but fatal. There is a time when our religious remembrances will rather be *aggravations* of our sin than mitigations of our mistakes. What was it to remember the words when the grave was empty, when the angels were filling it with morning light, when the stone, fastened, sealed, watched, was hurled back? It was nothing to remember *then*. That is the true faith which sees in the *darkness* as well as in the light, which goes to the grave bearing no spices but the spices of the immovable *certainty* of the resurrection and the life. You take your spices to your graves in the form of flowers and immortelles. It is pardonable, because the bones of the dead body are still hidden under the sod ; it would be better if we could look straight up into the blue morning and breathe upward the spice of a concentrated life and a hopeful and all-conquering spirit.

Memory is to be touched in *many* ways. The old sermons will yet come upon us with great vividness, the mighty prayers that took us up to heaven's gate so that we had a mind to alight there and never return, will come back with all but infinite energy and pressure upon the forgetful mind. And all the holy sabbaths that stand out upon the plain of time, like great mountains, will rush upon the recollection and become the chief of our joys, or the most oppressive and unanswerable of our accusations. Cultivate your *memory* ; live in your religious recollections ; if you let your yesterdays die, I wonder not that your to-morrows are amongst the darkest of your fears. Rather would I say, The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine. Remember the old battles and the old victories, the ancient fears, and the light that drove them away like shadows that could stand no longer in their presence, and say with heightening thankfulness,

“ His love in time past forbids me to think  
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.”

Do not let history be wasted upon you, your experience evaporate and be found no more ; rightly estimated, human experience ought to be amongst the richest of human treasures.

For what *purpose* did the women come ? According to Matthew they came to “ see the sepulchre.” An atheist might have done *that*, any man might have done it—but when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary do it, it seems as if the Heavens were closed up and the earth were a place that had no sky. We trust to the *womanly heart* to keep up our noblest hopes, we give ourselves over into the custody of that higher love and trust. When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary cease to pray, no *man* will have audacity enough to lift his face heavenward. The *mother* must save us, the *housewife* must make the house a sanctuary, the womanly heart must keep the altar-fire ablaze.

They came “ to see the sepulchre,” and they *did* see it : they saw more of it than they expected to see—they saw it turned inside out. So may all our expectancy be fulfilled ! We came to the sanctuary to see—*what* ? One another ? an individual ? an occasion ? a service ? a sepulchre ? May we all be disappointed in this same happy way : may those who come to see the outside, the mechanical, and the transitory, see the Lord’s own face, aglow with the light which fills all heaven with its splendour. Many have gone with aching hearts to see some religious sight, who have returned with great joy.

“ And behold the angel of the Lord had rolled back the stone from the door.” Mark describes this angel beautifully ; Mark took more notice of certain particulars than any of the other evangelists ; for the detail of the picture, always consult the evangelist Mark. According to Mark the angel was a *young man*. Are there any *old* men in heaven ? None. There are really no old men on earth, if we take the right view of the case. How old are you, trembling pilgrim ? Do you say eighty ? I can show you a tree three hundred years old. Do you say you have passed the fourscore years, and now there remains but a little more light, and you will soon be gone ? You are an *old man*, but you are a *young being* : the *age* is an accident, the *existence* is a fact. Do

not give way to old age, it is only a mockery, it is not really old age : you are, if in Christ, always young. How else could the narrative read than that a *young man* came and did this ? For God could have sent no old man, having none in his great household. " Who are these, arrayed in white robes ? and knowest thou whence they came ? " " These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne night and day, and serve God in his temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." A youth that has no necessities, a youth on which time can write no wrinkle. We shall all be young some day, when we are clothed upon with our house from heaven ! God is always sending young men down into the world to roll its stones away, to break up its rocks, to liberate its captives, and to give new dawning. Encourage the young, be large-minded and pitiful toward their mistakes, and see in the outputting of their energy the possibility of a noble and beneficent manhood.

He rolled away the stone. The stone was turned to new *uses*, for the angel " sat upon it." What thought the stone had occasioned by Joseph's rolling it to the door of the sepulchre ! It was kindly meant : no other construction could possibly be put upon Joseph's act in that matter. It was sealed, it was watched, it was guarded—and yet it was rolled away. God sends a great wind upon the earth and throws down your towers and temples and towns and fortresses—an invisible wind—you cannot tell whence it comes or whither it goes, but it comes in great shocks and tries the foundations of your structures, breaks the ships of Tarshish, and troubles the sea as with great agony, and yet it is only a wind, without shape, without colour, without measure, almost without name, invisible—but when you see the ships hurried before it, and all their proud mast-work torn to rags and thrown into the foaming deep, and see great structures bulge out and fall flat down on the astonished earth, we feel how, in some aspects, we are truly little and weak.

Now the angel speaks, and I would hear every word he says. " Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said : come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly and tell his disciples that he is

risen from the dead, and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him : lo, I have told you." You could not have put more matter into so short a compass. The angels speak concisely, they have specific messages to deliver, and with miserliness of language they crush into every syllable all the meaning which it will hold. The speech was *sympathetic*—" Fear not ye." The speech was *heart-reading*—" For I know that ye seek Jesus." The speech was *explanatory*—" He is not here, he is risen, as he said." The speech was *comforting*—" Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The speech was *inspiring*—" Go ye." The angel was the first to preach Jesus and the Resurrection ; all other preachers follow the "young man" who announced the Resurrection and sent the women to proclaim it.

What was the *effect* of the preaching ? The women departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word. Haste, joy, energy, this is the missionary way, this is the true ministerial way, this is the great lecture upon the method of preaching. They departed quickly with fear and great joy, reverence and infinite rapture, and did run to bring his disciples word. We have fallen into a mean amble, we have slunk off and let every racer beat us ; the gospel messenger lags somewhere in the rear, he is outrun by many a man. We want more quickness, more energy, more running power in the church. We are indifferent, we are respectable, we are reluctant, we are calculating, we are selfish. Rather would I belong to a Christianity that is censurable from a worldly point of view by reason of its vehemence and energy, than belong to some perversion of Christianity which regards its religion and its slumber as coequal and synonymous terms.

And as they went—it always so happens ! A thing is never complete in itself ; incident runs into incident, and the whole work is carried on with infinite skill to perfectness, to symmetry and life. " And as they went," Jesus met them ! No man can go upon his errands without his company. Jesus Christ always meets his messengers or joins them or overtakes them : he is alway with his angels to the end of the world. And Jesus said, " Go." Some day we shall collect the incidents in which that word *Go* is used, and we shall see how wonderfully God's Spirit

- always points in the direction of movement, aggression, energy. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” With such a “GO” ringing in our ears, with the resonance of a thunder-trumpet, who will sit down or stand still or forget his errand ?

## XCV.

### P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, the darkness and the light are both alike unto thee : thou dost not slumber nor dost thou sleep, nor are thine eyelids weary and heavy. Thou dost cast the horseman into a deep sleep, and in the time of his slumber thou dost work out the great wonders of thy name, yea thou dost blind men with light and cause the day to be unto them as the night, and then thou dost send unto them revelations and messages from heaven. In our day there are twelve hours, but one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years in thy sight are but as one day. We cannot measure thy going, we are surprised and overtaken by sleep ; thou dost punctuate our time with nights and hours of forgetfulness, so that we cannot piece together in one line all the days and hours that we breathe. Thou only art sleepless, thou alone dost not slumber, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, and there is nothing hidden from the penetration of thy glance.

We own before thee our wickedness, and we ask thee not to look upon it with the eyes of judgment, but to look upon it with the eyes of pity and compassion. Thou seest all things, and yet thou dost remember that we are but dust, or as a wind that cometh for a little time and then passeth away. In wrath thou dost remember mercy, thine anger is kept back by thy love, thy righteousness does not strike us with death, because thy compassion pleads for the life which we have forfeited.

We come before thee with praises, with songs innumerable, ay, and sweet, full of the heart's tenderest tones, because of thy continual loving-kindness and the mercy which is to usward everlasting. We find thy mercy always near at hand : sometimes we have to seek for thy judgments, but thy compassions shine in all the light of the day and in all the radiance of the night. We live because thou dost love us ; we do not deserve our life, but thou dost spare it unto us as another opportunity to come to thee and be renewed by thy Spirit and by thy grace.

Surely thou dost delight in the man whom thou hast made, otherwise thou wouldest cut him down as with a sword and cast out his name from thy recollection—but thou dost spare him and watch him, with choice bread dost thou nourish him, and thou dost find for him water in the wilderness, and thou hast promised him growth and joy and rest in heaven. Thou hast indeed poured out thy heart's love as wine to be drunk by the children of men. How great is thy love, how tender is thy

pity, how incessant thy concern for the sons of men. We see this in the cross, we feel it in every beat of the heart of Christ, we behold it in all the revelation of the atoning ministry of the Son of God. In him we live, in him is our rest, in him is the spring of our joy, in him, through him, and by him alone do we live and move and have our being, and is our life lighted with a celestial hope.

We humbly pray thee to give us energy to meet all the demands that are made upon our life. Give us the responsive spirit which quickly, with all the joyous obedience of love, answers every appeal of thine. May we render thee no reluctant homage, but the homage of loving hearts, eager to pray, to adore, to sing, and to serve. Thus may our whole life be a sacrifice unto the Lord, heaven-ascending, sweet-smelling, acceptable unto God, that thou mayest yet have joy in the child of thine own creation.

Teach us how frail is our life upon the earth, how brief our time and how certain our dissolution. May we learn lessons from those that are round about us in pain, in weakness, in poverty and in distress, and whilst we are thankful that we are not reduced to the extremities of their condition, may we remember that in thy providence we too must lay down our life and die. May we therefore give our hearts unto wisdom, with all industry and patience ; may we serve every hour of the appointed time, and may we know the joy of those servants who being always ready can hardly be surprised by their Lord's coming.

Speak to those who are ill at ease, and cheer them with secret solaces from heaven. Save those that are helpless, and show them how in the extremity of weakness thou dost magnify thy gracious strength. Visit all who to-day need thee at home, because the house is dark, or empty, or filled with intolerable sadness. Be thou the Physician at home, and the preacher of thine own gospel to those who cannot come to thy church. Send a plentiful rain upon thine inheritance and refresh and bless every root which thou hast planted.

Care for our little ones, make their infancy the reason of thy tenderness, and because they are so little do thou bow thyself down to take them up, and in all such condescensions of love we shall see the mystery of our own redemption, and know how true it is that we are not saved by works, but by the grace of God. Amen.

### **Matthew xxviii. 11-20.**

11. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city (related by Matthew only), and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

13. Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

14. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught : and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

16. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a (*the*) mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17. And when they saw him, they worshipped him : but some doubted.

18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given (all authority was given) unto me in heaven and in earth.

19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations (make disciples of all the heathen), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost :

20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway (all the days), even unto the end of the world (the *age*). Amen.

### THE FINAL COMMISSION.

**I**T may be a little fanciful, but I would ask you to remember that this text consists of *ten* verses, and further to note that the ten verses are *equally divided*, and may therefore be said to constitute, in point of length, two *equal* but very *different* programmes. It may assist your imagination, and contribute to your enjoyment of the exposition, if you will suppose yourselves to be holding one programme in the one hand and the other programme in the other. The one is the programme of the *enemies* of Christ, the other is the programme of *Christ himself*, and upon the *moral difference* of those two programmes I risk the whole Christian controversy ! In studying the first five verses we shall see what the *enemies* did : when we come to the second five verses we shall see what *Jesus Christ* did, and let me repeat that upon the *difference of moral tone*, as between those two policies or purposes, I would risk every claim and every appeal coming under the title of Christian.

Our attention then is to be fixed upon a moral difference. Unusual circumstances have transpired, and the question to be considered and answered by us is—What different *effects* were produced by those unparalleled events ? Circumstances develop the moral nature of men : suddenly placed in new relations, the true nature of the man asserts itself. There has been no time for trimming, for preparation, for arrangement of a calculating kind ;

suddenly, like thunder at midnight, the men on both sides have been awakened to a new consciousness, and the question which we have now to put is—What was the *moral complexion* and tone and purpose of that new condition of affairs? You have the one programme in your right hand, you have the other programme in your left hand—look on this picture and on this, and upon the *moral difference* of the two fear not, Christian believers, to rest and risk the whole truth concerning the kingdom of heaven upon the earth. Let us see, then, how the case stands in detail.

We have first of all, on the part of the watch and those with whom they communicated, *confusion*. The mind is unbalanced, events have occurred for which there was no adequate intellectual or moral preparation—so one is saying one thing, and another another, and there is collision between the statements, and confusion is the word which best describes the condition of the mind of every speaker in that unhallowed communication. What was then to be done? First of all there was *bribery*, the money power was brought to bear upon those who had some part to play in the transaction. For money you can buy silence, for money you can procure false testimony, for money you can make the next step in your life comparatively easy. Then there were *lies*. You never find a single sin. Sin does not dwell, so to speak, in solitary places and alone ; sin is no hermit, sin means progeny, multitude, allies, confederates of every name and every colour. “Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept.” Have a short and simple message to deliver, and stick to it. Put your answer into words of one syllable, which the shallowest head can remember, and having said your lesson over to yourself a few times, it will become familiar to you, and when you are asked a question, speak it, and stand by it.

But that very simple answer incriminated the very men who used it! For observe, they were to confess that they had themselves *slept*. Why, they had slept all the day before in order to be ready for the sleeplessness of the night on which they were appointed to watch the sealed tomb! But they did not see that they were called upon to make *criminals of themselves* whilst they were trying to bear false witness against others. It was necessary, to give any colour of probability to their absurd and criminal statement, that they should confess themselves to have been

*unfaithful* to their trust. How difficult it is to be consistently bad ! How all but impossible so to patch lies together that they will hold up like a piece of solid masonry, and not slip out here and there and let the roof tumble upon all that they had supposed themselves to have securely built. All *stories* have to be rehearsed and recast and calculated and tested here and there, and have to be approved by men of cunning and subtle mind, and then they are sent away to make the best they can of such conditions as may daily arise.

Followers and speakers and lovers of *truth* have no arrangements to make. They may contradict one another in *verbal* statement, there may be a difference as to the recollection of *dates*, there may be some apparent direct contradiction as to the fact, now and again, but all can be cleared up and reconciled and settled into self-consistent harmony, without arrangement, collusion, or preparation of any kind. Men are not afraid to own that they were mistaken, to recall a statement, to amend a particular, because truth is always proverbially audacious in its fearlessness. It is not mere boldness, it is sublimely religious courage which upholds truth in all the criticism and cross-examination to which it is subjected.

The men who can tell lies about *themselves*, can easily tell lies about *others*, and therefore they engage to say that the disciples came by night and stole him away. The liar takes away the character of other men easily, because he has first taken away *his own*. He who familiarizes himself with suicide of a moral kind falls easily into murder of a moral nature. His hand is in it, he is to the manner accustomed, if not born. Expect no *justice* from the *liar*. Do not imagine that the liar will become a truthful man on purpose to serve *your* interests and to promote your good fortune and happy progress. The liar will *use* you, the false man will tear down all that is sacred in your name, tender in your family, and holy in your household. Falsehood is bad, through and through ; to it there is *nothing* sacred ; it owns no altar, it respects no oath, it abides by no sacramental bond. It will drink to your health, and stab you under the fifth rib ; it will smile upon you, and plunder not your property but your soul—your *soul*! Do not therefore let us give way to the ever-damaging sophism that a man may speak lies in one direction and be quite

truthful in another. There are no such anomalies in God's moral creation. He who can deliberately tell one lie, will tell a thousand if he has anything to gain by the cataract of falsehoods.

Then was there *truculence*. They took the money and did as they were told. They had a part to play, they were paid actors, they were professional liars, they had been feed to swear and work on the other side.

This then is the programme of the enemy. I find nothing *noble* in it, I find nothing massively *sensible* about it, I never saw a pack of men so little, mean-minded, sour-hearted, wicked, vile, bad—and there is no *genius* in their craft. Never did men go out into the world with so palpably absurd an account of a surprising event. Read the words again, and tell me if we ourselves, were we evilly disposed, could not have struck out something more ingeniously happy than this—"Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept." How could the men look at *themselves* and look at *one another*, after perpetrating a piece of contemptible folly like that? How could they ever shake hands one with the other in anything approaching trustful fellowship? How ever could they be sent out on any errand again so long as their life lasted, when they were capable of submitting to so contemptible a humiliation as to be told to say that the disciples outwitted them? Taking their *own* account of it, the disciples were sharper than they were. Taking the case exactly as they put it, they made *fools* of themselves as well as criminals. They had a charge, they were armed, the stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre was a sealed stone, and yet they said, for money's sake, that disciples without arms and without strategical power and without resources, came and played a successful trick upon them whilst they were asleep!

The enemy has never got beyond this programme. The enemies of Christianity to-day are working according to this time-bill. They start from this point, take this journey, and arrive at this destination. The genius of anti-Christian argument has never published another programme than the one which is now before us. The words may have been altered, a little re-arrangement of sentences may have taken place, some difference may have been made in the punctuation, but in substance, in moral compass, in

intellectual dignity, the programme of eighteen hundred years ago is the programme of anti-Christians this day.

Let us now look at the programme in the other hand, which is the programme of Jesus Christ and his disciples. The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them—the familiar mountain, the grand old hill-church, the typical place! No dark corner, screened off for dark uses, but a mountain caught by the great light of heaven at every point of its rugged majesty. Not into a *cavern*, not into a fissure of a rock, not into the depths of some inaccessible forest, but into a MOUNTAIN. There is health already in these living lines.

And when Jesus came to them, what did he say? “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth : go ye therefore and teach.” Who would not rather take *this* programme as his life-guide? Listen to the difference of the moral tone. On the one hand—“Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept.” On the other, Jesus says, “Go ye therefore,” that is, because I have all power in heaven and on earth, “and TEACH.” In Christianity, when allowed to speak for itself, you always hear a tone of high spiritual robustness. Christianity is a lesson, a message, and has to be taught, and teachers are appointed of God who are qualified by his Spirit and grace to utter the lesson and explain alike its patent and its hidden eloquence.

And observe how this teaching is bounded. It is only bounded by “*all nations*.” This is the beneficence of Christianity, it will not teach a *few*, it will not be dwarfed into a *sect*, it will not be bricked up within given boundaries, and held there as the prisoner of any number of partialists; its wings were meant to flap in the firmament, and its voice loud and sweet enough to be heard all over the spaces, and to cause its gospel tone to fall like a revelation upon the ear of every listening man.

Compare the *breadth* of the one programme with the *narrowness* of the other ; the breezy, fresh, mountain-like air of the one programme with the head-to-head, whispering, collusive, calculated programme of the enemy. Judge the policies of men by their *moral tone*. Beware of men who set traps for the catching of the unsuspecting, and have faith in those teachers who have a grand moral tone, and who exhibit in every breath and act and word a

life worthy of the majesty which they can but imperfectly represent.

These are the two programmes which are before the world this very day. First of all, in the camp of the enemies, there are *perplexities* : they do not move along straight lines ; for a time the road seems broad enough and open enough, and they get along for a mile or two with considerable speed, and then suddenly there is a gate in the road to which they have no key, or a deep place which they cannot fathom, and dare not attempt to leap. There are ugly *facts*, there are surprising events to be accounted for, there are cross lights that daze the vision, and cannot be exactly set in their astronomical centres. So the enemies of Christ have told a crooked story, or a lame one, or a short one—and I have to ask you to fall asleep over many a mile of the road, or you never can pass that way. There are *imperfect explanations* : if you will forget the substantial and central thing to be explained and vindicated, then you may be content with certain superficial references, but when you come to vital questions, heart enquiries, when you need an answer to a question shooting itself out of the very centre and sanctuary of the soul, you will not get a satisfactory reply.

And many of those men who undertake to misrepresent the Christian cause, fall into this very matter of *self-crimination* : they are content to say, “ We were asleep, we had not insight enough, we are but imperfectly acquainted with that subject, we have not before us the necessary information ; ” in some form or other they will use the explanation, “ We were asleep.” Christianity is never asleep, truth is never asleep, reality never sleeps, never slumbers ; reality is always the same, with a simple, straightforward, graphic, yet oftentimes profound and mysterious tale to tell—but the mystery is only as the sky to the earth, a necessary part of the complete economy of things, but heightening itself beyond the hands and eyes of impertinent enquirers.

In the case of the second programme, we see the best and wisest way of treating the first. No notice was taken of the plan of the enemy, no caution was given as to the craftiness of the men who were setting up a contradictory story. That is the wisdom of Christianity, not to be *answering the enemy always*, but to be telling its own tale, speaking its own gospel, walking its own way,

healing the hearts wounded and cursed by sin. The Christian pulpit will become what it ought to be when it pays less attention to the men who hold by the first programme, and when it goes straight forward on its great evangelistic and missionary tour, of telling the world that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a Physician there. Men are not healed by *argument*, men are not saved by happy *tricks in controversy*. I have no message to any man who is not *desiring* the message before I utter it. The gospel is an *answer*—you must provide the *question*. The gospel does not come down, saying, “Let us start an argument,” the gospel is *God’s answer to man’s necessity*. Therefore go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature—every creature will not hear it, every creature will not respond to it, but you will find out in every house and town and land and empire where those are who are waiting for the consolation of Israel, and who are asking a question to which there is no true answer but from the cross of Christ. And every man has work to do : Christianity starts men upon no little errands, Christianity has no merely short journeys for its propagandists to undertake. Every journey is a long one, though it may seem to be locally short ; there is no stopping place on the line of Christian evangelists until the knowledge of the Lord spread itself over the globe as the waters overflow in infinite billows the channels of the deep.

And then behold the *inspiration* under which all this work has to be conducted. “Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age.” He does not send us out *alone* ; he divides the burden ; he shares the peril ; he inspires our courage ; he is a present Captain, always in the thick of the fight, and always so near that a *whisper* may reach him, or a glance of weariness and doubt bring from his radiant face a shining that shall be as the dawning of a new day. Do we realize a *present* Christ ? Have we that acuteness and largeness of faith which can feel the Son of God at our very side ? Do we see him in the breaking of the family bread, do we hear him in the movements of the events of the day that is passing over us, do we catch glimpses of him in many a strange providence, and are we quite sure, by the happy realizations of spiritual affection, that he is within the reach, yea, within the beating of our own hearts ? If not, we have lost the original inspiration, we are repeating a lesson, not deliver-

ing a message ; we are uttering a statement in letters, and not a cry from a sanctified and impassioned heart.

This is the programme of Christianity to-day. If the one programme has not changed, neither has the other. You will get into dangerous places if you change one line of the original programme of your Saviour and Founder, as a Christian Church. Christianity comes to *few* men as an *argument* ; it may come to *all* men as a *blessing*. The light does not come as a puzzle in solar physics, it comes in cheering brilliance and warmth to do manifold good in nature and in life. Few men may be *theologians*, but all men may be *Christians*. Go with the opposition, and you will have to evade and arrange and manipulate so as to escape the difficulties of history and the pressure of immediate facts, but go with Christ, and you will teach and comfort and bless all nations. You may be weak in argument, but you may be mighty in prayer. The clever manager of words may outrun you in the race of eloquence, but when the heart is sad and the night of loneliness is without one star to break its infinite and intolerable monotony, then your comfort will be sought as men cry for water when they burn with thirst.

Christianity will find its best eloquence in its *beneficence*. To do *good* is to repel every enemy and to answer every sneer. I want us as Christians so to work, that men will be able to say, when they are tempted to abandon the church and leave Christian society, " We are poor men, illiterate men, uneloquent men ; we cannot answer arguments ; but the Christians of this neighbourhood have been kinder to us than any other people. We know not what you say when you utter long words and refer to historical difficulties, but the woman who sat up with our dying child was a woman who could *pray*. We do not understand your chronology and archaeology and your scientific penetrations and oppositions ; you confuse us with such unfamiliar words ; but in *sorrow* it is the Christian who calls at this house *first*, it is the Christian who stays *longest*, it is the Christian who speaks *most sweetly*, it is the Christian that puts into our minds the most elevating and soothing thoughts." So long as Christianity can elicit testimony *like that*, all opposition against it is a worthless taunt, a mockery that has no message for the heart, a lie that turns black in the face whilst it utters its base message.

XCVI.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art slow to anger, but we are swift to do that which is evil. Because thy compassions fail not, therefore do we rebel against thee with a high hand and with an arm outstretched. Judgment is thy strange work, mercy is thy delight, and the heart of man is set in him to do evil, for he knows that the Lord will not smite until the last, and that his mercy endureth for ever. This we have learned through Jesus Christ thy Son, our one and only Saviour : he wept over us ; though we had stoned the prophets and killed them that were sent unto us, yet he wept over us as over those whom he would gladly have redeemed. Thou lovest the sons of men, thine heart is moved towards them in great love and in continual compassion and hopefulness. Therefore is thy providence a revelation of thy mercy, and therefore is every day a token for good unto our souls, if we could but read upon it thy sweet and gracious purpose. Thou hast no thought of evil towards us, thine heart looks out upon us wistfully, with the yearning and expectation of love that cannot be satisfied until the last prodigal has returned and the whole household is complete.

We come to thee now with songs of delight far above all words to utter — a love that has no speech because of thy lovingkindness and thy tender mercy. Thou hast stooped very low to find us, thou hast gone out of thy way to recover those who have strayed, thou hast lighted the house and swept it diligently to find the meanest piece that was lost. We were as sheep gone astray, now we are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and safely enfolded upon the high mountains of Israel, we will be glad in the Lord and praise him with a new song. Once we were blind, now we see, once we knew not what was above the blue sky which we called the day, now we see beyond it into the upper spaces and wider liberties of thy creation, and behold how high is God's sanctuary and how wide the temple of the Lord.

Bless us, we humbly pray thee, in the name of Jesus Christ the Priest and Saviour of the world, with daily revelation of truth, and daily delight in thy wisdom. Wean us from all forbidden things, overcome the fascinations of time and sense with some mightier attraction of thine own, destroy within us him who rules over our life, set up thine own kingdom in the heart and be our one Master. We would be slaves of thine, we would be captives of the Lord, we would be bound hand and foot, head and heart, by the chains of thy love, and seek no other liberty than the range of thy will and purpose. For this desire we bless thee : it is the

marvel of our misspent life : we knew not that thou wouldest bring us even so far as to lay down our will at thy feet. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

Continue thy ministry within the soul, break down every barrier, drive away every cloud, and cleanse the whole sanctuary of the life and make it a fit dwelling-place for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Give us the eye which sees the inner meaning of things, give us the hearing ear and the heart which listens for the lowest tones of thy music and all the subtle suggestions of thy revelation in the Book, in life, in history, and in providence. Deliver us from supposing that we are bounded only by things seen and temporal, and give us such a consciousness of other presences and other distances as shall ennable our whole thought and lift up our life to the heavenly level.

We have done the things we ought not to have done, and left undone the things that we ought to have done, and our lamentation is a sorrow that should have no end. But thou dost interrupt our reproaches and confessions with assurances of love and offers of pardon : ere we have completed the tale of our shame, thou hast called for a robe to clothe us, for a ring for our finger, and thou hast lighted the house with a new glory and filled it with ineffable gladness. This is thy wondrous way, this the very mystery and glory of thy love ; because thy compassions fail not, therefore are we not consumed, therefore have we a great hope.

Thou knowest what hearts are burdened, what lives are strained by difficulty and bewildered by perplexity ; thou knowest where the shadow of death has broadly fallen, and where the grave has been dug in the household. Thou knowest those who are feeling inward pain and weakness and distress hitherto concealed, thou knowest all the wants of our life, its pain and its poverty are continual prayers unto the heavens. We humbly desire therefore that thou wouldest, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, come to us with answers larger than our prayers, and with revelations that shall astound our vision by their beauty and magnificence.

Let our houses be precious to thee, may they be homes indeed, wherein dwells the spirit of rest, and broods the angel of peace. Make our fire in the winter time, and fill our windows with light when the summer comes round, and out of every flower may we bring some new lesson of thy care. Let the little ones all live and grow strong and wise, and become sources of gladness in the house. Let the old grandfather and grandmother, those who represent the older generation, be comforted with very rich solaces, and be made quite young again—not in their flesh, but in their Christian inspiration and hope. Dry our tears when we dare not touch them, soothe the grief too sensitive to be approached by the kindest human love, and into the ear that is dying, pour the last earthly word of comfort, and speak of the resurrection and the life.

As for our enemies, do thou forgive them with great pardons ; when the abjects gather themselves against us and we know it not, the Lord dispel their illusions, and preserve their lives. Amen.

### REVIEW OF THE WHOLE.

WE have come to the end of this gospel of Matthew, and if you ask me what I think of the gospel now that I have closed it, I will tell you. I am like a man who has been in a strange land, whose speech and usages he cannot wholly comprehend, and about which there is a touch of infinite charm. All the people wore unfamiliar garments, no man spoke my native tongue, the whole population moved in urgent haste, and often whispered with keenest energy. Amongst them stood a Man like no other man I ever saw, with a face that burned, an eye that changed from pity to judgment and from judgment to pity with startling rapidity, a voice in which thunders were chained and all the mysteries of music hidden. A voice marvellous ; now so like other voices that it moved no sense of wonder, and now so unique that all other voices sounded shallow and commonplace as compared with its compass and solemnity. A strange Man—now shrunk from like a mountain on fire, now sought as a garden of delight in which palms grew for wounded hearts, and flowers bloomed that were fit for festivals of unutterable joy. Loved by all women, kissed by all children, longed for by all sufferers, besought, entreated with tears, honoured, worshipped, hated with all the malignity of hell.

His name was JESUS. He was a Man of strange ways : so fond of loneliness that he stole away secretly to the mountain long after the sunshine had fled from its slopes and crags, and when the cold stars looked glitteringly upon the cold dew of the still night. There he was, there within the crags as within a holy church, there on his knees, with his face upturned to the starry canopy, and his lips moving in the eloquent agony of speechless prayer. No human creature was at hand ; angels thronged the steps, and the low winds brought fragrance from sweetest paradises, and the planets attested the solidity and beneficent rigour of infinite law—but no man was there, no child, no woman, not Mary who bore him : he stood off like a Priest, he stood above, like a Sun that cannot be touched.

Then in the morning when I saw him on common ground again, how weird he looked, how solemn, how unlike all other

men, so old, yet so young, so commonly clothed, yet so dignified, speaking the language of all with an accent which none could imitate, as ready for good work as he had been ready for holy prayer. Men never knew what to call him, he was almost the anonymous one ; he was called " JESUS " by the angel, but to others he was all but Nameless. I never heard him called by his name to his face ; every one said *thou*, or *he*, or *Rabbi*, but no lips could be so far irreverent as to call him familiarly by his name, except when away from him, and then the name was spoken with tender gratefulness—" A Man that was called Jesus said unto me," — " But Jesus said."

His shape was as a cloud that changes every moment into some new suggestion of magnificence or beauty. His movement was through an uncalculated orbit, his outlook rested upon points which no astronomy had mapped. Like a bird he sometimes came so near as to be almost familiar, then like a bird with out-spread wings that carried him to the entrances of other worlds. O those wings, wings of the soul, wings of almighty, wings that told all the world that he was here but for a time, and that he had brought with him the power to return—those wings that give the life that carries with them so much liberty, the soul-wings that bear him away above the range and above the uproar of the thunder, which makes the timid earth afraid. O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest ! The sun of righteousness is risen with healing in his wings.

If you ask me what further I think of the gospel now that it is closed, I will tell you. I shut my eyes and see it all, I betake me to some quiet dream-spot where the flocks lie down at noon, and in a waking dream I hear and see everything once more. What voices of the night are these like silver bells that sweetly sound ? Is it the plash of some gentle stream flowing through gardens that slope towards the sun ? Is it converse between spirits that speak to one another some tender secret of the heart ? It is in very deed a song : it rises and falls with the rhythm of some other and infinite movement to which the throbbing stars beat time, and which all Heaven accepts as the law of its own security. What song is that ? It is a birth-song : it is no prophecy of mere hope, it is the joy-song of an immediate blessing—" A Child is

born, a Son is given : the second Adam has appeared to retrieve the fortunes of the first, and to work out some unknown mystery of grace. Glory to God in the highest !” That song leaves us until it becomes but a whisper in the air, further, further it goes —“ On earth peace, and good will toward men.” That song comes downward, it broadens and it rolls and fills the whole earth with musical thunder. That was the song I heard. The first Adam came in silence, the second with songs of angels ; the first a dying body, the second a quickening spirit. He came with music, he came to make music, he loves music, he will reign till all nations repeat his song and call him blessed.

Such is the impression with which I came out of that gospel scene. Quickly the scene changes and enlarges, and many a wonder crowds upon my eyes. The Man who was born amid the songs of angels goes out to make the whole world glad. He himself will be the song. That is the purpose of our being, not to listen to music only, but to *make* it and to *be* it. He is as a Father standing at the wide-open door, wistfully longing for the prodigal’s return. Then swiftly he is a King that says he will make a marriage feast for his Son, and fill the whole house with radiant guests, and make it glow with sacred fire. Then suddenly, he is as a mother that will gather all her children within her arms and press them to a heart that never felt towards them other than with unutterable love. She will give them rest, wine, milk, and honey. Then he is as a tender nurse who will take into the custody of his love all little children and helpless lives.

He does not care for mere *literal consistency* in the figures under which he represents himself. He is a broken-hearted *Father*, bitterly disappointed because his last born is not at home, a great *King* who takes out of his wardrobe all the wedding dresses and sends out invitations to the whole universe. *Mother*, and *Shepherd*, and *Nurse*, and *Friend*, and *Teacher*,—he will descend to assume *any* figure and condition that will touch the pathos of the occasion with which he has to deal. Tell him that the brother is dead, and he will cry over the vacancy in the family circle,—but he will cry in fuller and bitterer floods over the city which has stoned the prophets and killed them who were sent to it.

So weak, yet so strong—amid the weakness of tears there is the energy of almighty power. The Man touches the blind eyes and

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they are blind no more. The deaf ear he unstops, and blesses it first of all with the music of his own voice, after which all other music must be commonplace. He turns the desert into a banqueting hall, walks upon the sea, summons the dead from the winding sheet, and in the presence of his health all disease flies away, ashamed of its own corruption. He went about doing good. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. In a moment of supreme passion of love, he confounded all sense and reason and literal understanding by saying that he would give his flesh and his blood for the life of the world. We must be a long time with him before we can enter into the mystery of that gift.

Again the scene changes before the vision of my memory, and I see a man who boldly announces that he has come to set up what he calls the kingdom of heaven upon the earth. Not to raise a house, but to establish a throne ; not to be one of many, but to be the all-including One ; not to consult other kings, but to rule them ; not to offer homage, but to claim it from all masteries and dominions, from all chiefs and potentates. This Man's subject of speech is a kingdom, this Man's kingdom is heaven, this Man's heaven is not a distant city but a presence in the soul. It was the *royal* element in this Man's teaching that troubled the great ones of his time ; it was the royal element that troubled Herod and all Jerusalem with him—he did not send to ask where the Shepherd was born, but where was born him that is *King* of the Jews. It was the royal element that threw Pilate's mind into perplexity and involved the throne of Cæsar in mysterious and threatening clouds. Christ would be royal, there was royalty in his voice as he reviewed the morals of the ancient world and replaced them by principles of his own ; there was royalty in his parables as he spread in them a feast for the hunger of all nations ; there was royalty in his spirit as he declined all flattery, resented all patronage, called all men to himself as the centre of completeness and rest.

The *royal* element in his thought and action contradicted all that was mean and lowly in his outward circumstances, and those circumstances in their turn seemed to mock with bitter irony the claim of royalty which he continually set up. Royal, yet he had not where to lay his head ; royal, yet he had not a stater for the tax-

gatherer when he called ; royal, but not recognized as one of the brotherhood of kings or invited to dine with that charmed circle. How then was he royal ? In the magnificence of his thought, the sublimity of his purpose, the infiniteness of his love, and the splendour of his priesthood. Royal, and therefore he could stoop ; royal, and therefore he could wash the disciples' feet ; royal, and therefore he could accept the cross and triumph over its shame and pain. This is kinghood, this is royalty—not a decoration which perishes, but a splendour self-created and self-sustaining, evermore.

We have lost the *royal element* in our preaching ; we are now making apologies, we are now asking permissions, we are now requesting to be allowed that Christ should be heard along with teachers venerable by their antiquity and dignified by the general pureness of their tone. The preacher now has no kingdom to set up, but some little apology to offer. Now the cry is not “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be yet lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in,”—it is some weaker cry, some paltry tone of excuse, or some dainty endeavour to escape the tragedy of the occasion. Christianity is nothing if not a kingdom. This doctrine does but palter with the shattered fortunes of humanity, if it does not come with royal credentials and offer royal bounties to the soul. Again and again, day by day, do I, in the hearing of my memory, listen to this weird, mysterious Teacher, talking about “ THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”

Then comes the strangest scene of all the scenes so strange in this exciting gospel. No such spectacle ever appalled the human imagination ; the mere historian cannot touch it with his tool of cold iron, language dare not take within its prison bars a story so tragical as if it could hold it up. Every word has an atmosphere of its own, between the lines deep rivers roll with apocalyptic images reflected from their gleaming waters. The very punctuation hides hints of mysteries yet to be explored, or marks our progress towards glories yet to be revealed. We are lost in worlds whose paths we have not known. Marvellous vision, this. A prisoner, held in a cruel grip ; a silent Man in the presence of imperial power, a Man deserted by the few followers whose uncertain worship seldom passed beyond the point of selfish or troubled

wonder. A great grim cross, stoutly built, and built with savage delight, and thrust into the stony ground with the joy of cruel triumph. An unresisting victim, with nails driven through his hands and feet, with the crown of thorns crushed into his temples, with the spear thrust into his side. I see darkness at midday, a field of solid rocks throbbing under my feet ; above are clouds through which innumerable eyes may be peering, and sothing around the whole circle of visible things are winds in which innumerable travellers seem to be hastening to the cross. Then a cry of orphanage, an uprising of the sheeted dead, the cry, “ It is finished,” and I see and hear no more—for the praying fails beneath the accumulated fear. Be quiet for a little while : in such a presence speech would be profane : but a little while be quiet—a day or two be quiet.

Then the light comes back, the blue sky sheds its blessing on the terror-stricken earth, and away yonder on a mountain stands the risen Man, possessed of all power, sending out his gospel to the whole world, and having spoken of his great last word of love he rises, he enters into a descending cloud sent down to receive him, as in a chariot, and into the skies where the angels sang the birth-song rises the Conqueror who has made that lofty song the possible music of all human life. Hark ! A grand Man. Even so, Amen.

Son of man, what seest thou ? I see a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains scattered by a sower who went forth to sow. I see first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear : field after field of golden grain, all the hillsides rich with corn, all the valleys rejoicing in the abundance of its sunny harvest. I see reapers going forth to reap, I see the shocks of corn fully ripe, I hear the angels' song—“ Harvest home.”

Son of man, what seest thou ? I see a good Shepherd going forth to seek the sheep that was gone astray. I watch him threading his way through stony places and looking wistfully for some footprint to guide him. I see him climbing hills, crossing streams, and cleaving through rank brushwood. I see his eye brighten and his face flush as he lays the lost one on his shoulder and returns to the fold with thankful, shepherdly joy.

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Son of man, what seest thou ? I see a Father, looking tenderly and wearily into far-off space, if haply he may catch sight of a figure well known and long wished for. On his face are the stains of many tears, in his eyes is the glitter of an expectancy daily disappointed. Old age has come upon him with the prematurity of sorrow overmuch. He can find no home in the house though the house is ample and grand. Now he suddenly starts, now his breast heaves with emotion, he runs, he falls on his son's neck and kisses him, and with many a sob he says, "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

Son of man, what seest thou ? I see the shining of a great light, the outbursting upon all nations of the glory of the Lord. Gentiles are coming to his light and kings to the brightness of his rising. The abundance of the sea is being converted, and the forces of the Gentiles are hastening to the cross. Midian and Ephah, Sheba and Tarshish, Kedar and Nebaioth are moved by new sensations. City is saying to city, " Let us go up speedily to seek the Lord of Hosts." Men are beating their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and idols are being cast to the moles and to the bats. I hear a shout ; it outswells the mean eloquence of the thunder, and rises in towering pride of strength, " Hallelujah ! The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, for ever and ever. Hallelujah, Amen. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing, for ever and ever, Amen. Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Hallelujah, Amen."

Despised and rejected of men, he is now the Light of the universe and the joy of the whole creation. He sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied, for his boundless Universe is a boundless Heaven. Sweet, sweet Gospel !

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## TWO MOUNTAIN SCENES.

Matt. iv. 8, 9.

"The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain ; and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

To this proposition Jesus Christ returned an answer which caused the devil to leave him. He received a great offer and he declined it with holy sternness. It was truly a great offer —nothing less than "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," and the return to be made was sentimental rather than practical, or at least would have been so regarded by any other man than Jesus Christ. The offer was Empire, and the price was Worship. Jesus Christ said *No*, and came down from the mountain as poor as he was when he was taken up. With what ease he could have had "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," and what good he could have done if all things had been under his control ! Yet he said *No*; and in after days he who might have been King of the world said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." So much, you say, for throwing away the great opportunities of life ! Read again—

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appionted them ; . . . and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xviii. 16, 18).

Put these two mountain scenes together, and consider all that has happened between the one occasion and the other. If you thus lay hold of the case in all its bearings, some such thought as this will run through your mind—You can take the world on the devil's terms, so simple, so easy ; or you can say *No* to the devil, and come down to poverty, to hard work, to sorrow, to sacrifice,

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and through that rugged course you can find your way back to the mountain clothed with larger power, even with much of heavenly and earthly dominion put into your hands.

And it comes very much to this in life. To every man the devil is saying, Accept the world on my terms ; fall down and worship me, and I will give you riches, fame, power, or whatever you think will make your life happy. Such a temptation comes in some form and in some degree to every heart, does it not ? Now in direct opposition to this, Jesus Christ says—Take no thought for your life ; seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these prizes and honours, so far as they are good, will be added to you : the devil took me up into an exceeding high mountain, and offered me the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if I would fall down and worship him ; I said *No* to his offer, and I came down from the hill to live a life of sacrifice, patiently and lovingly to do the work of him that sent me ; and in the long run I ascended another mountain, from which I could see more kingdoms and greater than before, and instead of the rulership of one world, all power in heaven and in earth was given unto me : he that would save his life shall lose it, he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it ; that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die !

Considering the peculiarities of the human mind, so far as we know them, the appeal of the devil has one supreme advantage over the appeal of Christ—it is not only addressed to the senses, but it promises instant gratification : no time need be lost ; there is the prize, and here is the direct road to its attainment ! Whereas in the appeal of Christ we come upon all the difficulties of delay and suffering, to which is added a scarcely confessed suspicion of possible miscarriage and disappointment. The devil promises you for to-day ; and for to-day Christ seems to promise nothing but tears and thorns and crucifixion. “ Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that find it.” See how true it is in all life that when a prize is within view we are impatient of delay. Thus, if you stifle the expression of your convictions, you may have a certain honour almost instantly ; if you utter and defend your convictions, you may have to wait seven years for that same honour ! If you lull your conscience into slumber, you make your fortune in a twelve-

month : if you obey your conscience, you may never make a fortune at all ! Truckle, and be rich ; resist, and be poor : go with the world, and be flattered ; go against it, and be scorned. Who can hesitate between contrasts so broad !

If we call in the moralist to help us in this difficulty, he will probably direct our attention to facts as the best elucidation of principles, and may challenge us to consult the unquestionable and solemn testimony of human experience as a final authority within the region of reason. He will be likely to tell us in the first place that all these promises of short cuts to supreme position and influence are *lies*. He will acknowledge, indeed, that there are short roads to ownership, notoriety, and self-importance ; but these he will carefully distinguish from the supremacy that is solid and enduring and beneficent. He will, too, damp the ardour of the young by assuring them that realities are often the exact opposite of appearances, and may startle them still further by the assurance, which he will be able to justify by many examples, that it is possible for a man to be the slave of the very things which he seems to own and rule. Look at the price required for the supremacy offered to Christ—" If thou wilt fall down and worship me !" But consider what it is to worship at the wrong altar ! It is to debase the affections, to bring the best energies of the soul under malign influence, and to forfeit the power to enjoy the very things which it is supposed to purchase. Worship expresses, though it may be feebly, the worshipper's supreme ideal of life ; if, therefore, it be offered to an evil spirit, the whole substance and course of life will be deeply affected by the error. What if the very act of false worship disqualify the soul for relishing any supposed or undoubted joy ? Offer a man long draughts of the choicest wines if he will first drench his mouth with a strong solution of alum, and what are the choicest wines to him then ? They cannot penetrate to the palate, they are absolutely without taste, and they mock the appetite they were meant to gratify. So, if a man put his moral nature under false conditions, and create anarchy between himself and the principle of eternal righteousness, no matter what fortune or honor may accrue to him, his power of serene enjoyment is gone, and he becomes burdened and plagued by his very successes. This will be the first point insisted upon by the moralist ; in the plainest words he will say—" The promise

is very great, but it is a lie to begin with, and the man who sells his soul to get it will soon find that he is neither more nor less than a dupe of the devil."

But what of the facts which seem to contradict this theory of the moralist? "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree : their eyes stand out with fatness ; they have more than heart can wish ; they are not in trouble as other men." Do they not seem to have gotten the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? In answering this inquiry the moralist will insist that such facts exactly illustrate what he has just said—viz., that some men are the slaves of the very things which they seem to own and rule. He will contend that technical possession is not full ownership, and he will make his appeal to final and decisive results rather than to temporary appearances and relations. For example, he will acknowledge that the wicked have been in great power ; but he will show that they have "passed away," and that they have not been found even by those who most diligently sought for them ; he will acknowledge that the wicked have sometimes had more than heart can wish, but he will prove that they have always been set in "slippery places," and that their "end is destruction." He will not confine himself within narrow limits in giving his judgment, but will include within his survey spaces and times needful for securing a just perspective. It is quite true that "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable ;" but if we bring considerations of eternity to bear upon the discipline of time, even now we may have joy, and may even "glory in tribulation also."

Now look at the other side of the case. Jesus Christ resists the temptation to give his soul for gain, and he goes down the hill poor, lonely, and apparently helpless. He brings back nothing but his unimpaired integrity ; he is whole of heart,—and that is all you can say about him, unless you add, what is really the same thing in other words, that his faith in God and his idea of worship are pure and wise. His course seems for a time troubled with the frown and judgment of God, for few friends come to his side, there is no joy in his lot, his work is hard, and the return of his toil is poor. He calls himself a King, and men laugh at him ; he says he is the Son of God, and men take up stones to stone

him. Is it not, then, quite plain that he lost his chance when he said *No* on the hill, and that he must take the consequences of his obstinacy? A man who would so argue would seem to have a good deal of sound sense on his side; at any rate, he might refer to so-called facts with very emphatic confidence. He might almost feel called upon to treat with positive mockery the words of Christ, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,"—for more obvious irony never provoked the laughter of mankind. And still the shadows thicken upon the gloomy scene; poverty is made poorer by loss upon loss; and further on his oldest friends drop off, and the disciple he loves the most instinctively assumes an attitude of departure. Plainly enough, this Man who set Worship above Empire sacrificed his fortune to his sentiments, and lost a crown to save an idea. If there be anything more on the dark and downward way of his ill-luck, it cannot be other than a Cross—a Cross with aggravations too; and in its agony he will learn that violent sentiments have violent ends. So it would seem! We are told that the earth is round; but there are great crags and pits on its rugged surface for all that. We are told that Christ had a kingdom, when it is quite certain that he had not so much as a home. These are great contradictions, and it is simply in vain for us to try to force a reconciliation; reconciliation can only be wrought, if wrought at all, by time, often long and dreary.

"The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; . . . and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—And there is nothing of boast or vaunt in the Lord's sweet tone. It is as if the sown wheat had said in golden harvest, "Behold, I have been brought up from the depths of death, and my life is an hundredfold more than before." It is thus, through all the ages, that the good man comes to his strength and crown,—through pain and tears, through nights of gloom and days of toil, and grief that makes the heart grow old, and forsakenness that makes a man afraid of his own voice, so weird and so mournful is life in its emptiness and silence! It is a long way, you see, and some men die before they get a glimpse of its sunny end. How, then, as to the truth of the doctrine that to be right is to be

rich? To test that doctrine you must get into the very heart of the sufferer himself. He will show you the compensations of a righteous life; he will tell you how sweet is the bread eaten in secret, how holy and all-comforting is the approval of a good conscience, and how infinite is the independence of the soul whose trust is in God. In such a case the poverty is wholly on the outside: the soul is clothed in more than purple and fine linen, and is rich with more than gold. Outside, things are rough enough undoubtedly; the storm does not spare the roof, nor do the rags keep away the biting wind, yet somehow the man who is right has a quiet and thorough mastery over the circumstances which fret and vex the mere surface of his life. The king is within. The fountain of his joy is not dependent on the clouds, but on "the river of God, which is full of water." "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Whilst all this is true, and is sealed as such by the oath of a number which no man can number, it is also outwardly true, so to speak; that is to say, goodness rises to its right position in the world and takes the throne of supreme and imperishable power. In the last result it is goodness that conquers and rules. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green." "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall see the fruit of their doings." Now and again life suddenly opens, and we see flashes and glimpses of what is coming upon the world. In the midst of tumult and blasphemy, so mad that we think there is no more chance for goodness, we see such homage paid to right as gives hope of its final conviction and universal sway. There are conflicts in which *character* determines the issue. In times of panic *goodness* is relied upon. In affliction and sorrow and ruin, it is the *good* man who is sent for. When the fierce wind throws down strong walls, and the whole air is black with cruel plague and pest, sparing neither old nor young, neither woman nor child, he who *prays* best is king. So, even in the outer world, and in tangible and visible ways, goodness comes to recognition and honour, in addition to its being accompanied by inward and spiritual satisfactions.

After this course of thinking we should be able to set down for human guidance one or two principles which seem, at least, to reach the point of certainty. Such as :—

First : Right ideas of *worship* will show the exact line of personal denial and sacrifice. Be right in heart towards God, and you will know what to do in the time of flattering offers and splendid opportunities.

Second : It is through *temptation* that we learn the true value of many convictions and habits. From our point of view it may seem a small thing to give up worship that we may win kingdoms ; it might seem indeed as if we were getting the kingdoms for next to nothing. The devil did not reckon so. He aims to get our *worship*, for he who has the heart has all !

Third : Self-denial, in the name and strength of God, may be a *long time* in coming to fruition in honour and dominion,—at least visibly, as we have just said. In the case of Christ it took nearly three years to die and rise and ripen, but in its ripening it filled heaven and earth ! “ If we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with him.”

Fourth : Whatever we have, much or little, of comfort, or honour, or influence, let it be as a flower ripened in the sun ; something coming up out of a deep true character ; beauty added to strength. Woe to the bloom that is artificial !

In the long run, then, we shall get our right position ; our sorrows will become our joys ; our sacrifices will be turned into our victories : and, truly, in a sense impossible to express in words, we shall not serve God for nought. To suffer *in the right spirit* is our daily difficulty. It is easy to suffer defiantly ; it is almost comfortable to suffer ostentatiously ; but to suffer as if we were not suffering, even with meekness, quietness, and long patience, to enter into the “ fellowship” of Christ’s sufferings, and to work out our course just as he did, who is sufficient ? Bravado will come to nothing. Selfish martyrdom will have no holy resurrection. Morbid pride in the neglect and disparagement accorded by the public will end in no blessing. Unrepining resignation, deep and loving trust in God, earnest diligence in all duty, loyal obedience to every sign of our Father’s will,—out of this discipline will come sweetest joys, honours as the stars for number, and peace deep as the calm of heaven.

## JESUS CHRIST'S CLAIM FOR HIMSELF.

"I proceeded forth and came from God."—JOHN viii. 42.

**S**HALL I startle you if I say, notwithstanding the multitude of books written upon the life of Christ, there is yet not only room but necessity for a volume to be written on that unexhausted theme? We have had outward lives of Christ enough, perhaps more than enough: lives that tell us about places and dates and occurrences: books of beautiful colouring, high description of locality and scenery, and the like. All the circumstantial occurrences of the life of the Son of God have been given us with tedious and painful minuteness and repetition by bookmakers of various degrees. What then is this other book we want? A complement, a completion, and an explanation of all other books, viz., "The Inner Life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Not a life of circumstances, but a life of thoughts, purposes, feelings, aspirations, desires; the inward, spiritual, metaphysical, eternal life of Christ. Can it ever be written? It will be often attempted—it will never be done, for no limited book can exhaust an illimitable subject.

Until we study this inner life of Christ deeply, all the outward life of Christ will be a plague to our intellect and a mortification to our heart: we shall always be coming upon things we cannot understand and cannot explain; not only so, we shall be coming upon things that seem to confront the understanding and to defy the intelligence of men. But if we get into sympathy with the inward spiritual life of Christ, then we shall do what Christ did—move out upon these outward and visible things and see them in their right relations and colours and proportions. The inward always explains the outward; why should it not be so in this greatest case of all? Come to the outward only, and you will have controversy, difficulty, discrepancy, intellectual annoyance, moral surprise, and perhaps spiritual disappointment. But begin

at the other end—get to know the man's soul, get into sympathy with his purpose, see somewhat of the scope and the outlook of his mental nature, and then you will take up the miracles as a very little thing.

Let me now give you, roughly, some hints of the kind of thing that is wanted. Suppose we saw one of the miracles of Christ. So far control your mind as actually to realize that you are present at what was called, in the days of Christ, the raising of the dead. Let us make this as realistic as we can : the dead man is here, the living Christ is here, the mourning friends are here—and presently the dead man rises and begins to speak to us, and we have seen what is called the miracle of resurrection. But now, is it trick or miracle you have seen ? Is it an illusion or a fact ? How am I to determine this question ? I cannot determine it in itself. Why ? Because my eyes have been so often deceived. I have seen what I could have declared to have been the most positive and absolute facts, and yet when the explanation has been given I have been obliged to confess that I was deceived and befooled by my own vision. If it has been so in a hundred cases, why not so in this ? At all events, there is that suggestion which may be pressed upon me until it becomes a temptation, and the temptation may be urged upon me so vehemently and persistently as almost to shake and destroy my faith. I can declare that I saw a man get up—but the conjurer comes to me and says, “ I will show you something equally deceiving.” I go, and I see his avowed trick : it does baffle me and surprise me exceedingly, and if he then shall follow up that conquest, and shall say, “ It was just the same with what you thought the raising of the dead,” he will leave me intellectually in a state of self-torment. I shall still think I saw the event, but he will continue to perplex my vision by a thousand tricks, and show me how impossible it is for any man to trust his eyesight.

Then what am I to do ? Leave the outward altogether. Watch the man who performed the miracle — listen to him : if his thoughts are deep and pure, if his mental triumphs are equal to his physical miracles, then admire and trust and love him. Take this same conjurer just referred to. When he is on the stage, and, so to speak, in character, he seems to be working miracles : they are miracles to me. Therefore, indeed, I go to see them, and ✓

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have no other reason than to be baffled and surprised and confounded, and to have my keenest watchfulness returned to me without the prize which it coveted. His tricks outrun my vision—my eye cannot follow his supple hand. How then? When he comes off the stage and begins to talk on general subjects I begin to feel my equality with him rising and asserting itself. On the stage I could not touch him—watching his hand I could not follow its manipulations at all. But when he comes away from his official character and his professional region, and begins to speak upon subjects with which I am familiar, I sound the depths of his mind, and get the exact measure of his character, and then he becomes clever, artful, surprising, delightful—but only a wizard, only a conjurer: wonderful with his wand in his fingers, nothing without it.

So when I go to Christ as a mere stranger, I see him raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, and I say, “We have seen these things attempted before, and very wonderful successes have followed the wand of the wizard and the word of the enchanter. This man may be but cleverest of the host, prince of princes, Beelzebub of the Beelzebubs. I will, therefore, not go further into this case; I have no time to examine this man’s credentials, I must be about another and a higher order of business;” but when he begins to talk I am arrested as by unexpected music. I say to him, “Speak on.” His words are equal to his works. He is the same off the platform as on it. Not only do I say, “I never *saw* it on this fashion before;” but I also say, “I never *heard* it on this fashion before.” I listen to his thoughts, to his purposes, to his desires, and I find that he is as inimitable in his thinking as he is in his working and acting. What then? I am bound to account for this consistency. All other men have been manifest exemplifications of self-inequality. We know clever men who are fools, strong men who are weak, eloquent men who stammer, men who are great in this direction, small in some other, self-contradictions, self-anomalies; and this want of self-consistency and self-coherence is at once a proof of their being merely men. But if I find a Man in whom this fact of inequality does not exist, who is as great in thinking as in working, who says that if I could follow him still higher I should find him greater in thinking than it is possible for any mere man to be in acting;

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then I have to account for that consistency which I have met nowhere else, and to listen to this Man's explanation of it : "I proceeded forth and came from God ;" "I am from above ;" that explanation alone will cover all the ground which he boldly and permanently occupies.

It will be infinitely interesting to study the inner life of Christ ; to make ourselves, so far as possible, as familiar with his thoughts as we are with his works. And if we do this, we shall come to set the same value upon his miracles that he himself did. What value did he set upon his miracles for their own sake ? None. When did he ever say, "Behold this mighty triumph of my power, ye sons of men ?" Never. When did he sound a trumpet and convoke a mighty host to see the loosing of a dumb tongue, and the opening of a blind eye ? Never. When did he ever make anything of his miracles other than something merely elementary and introductory, and of the nature of example and symbol ? Never. How was this ? Because he was so much greater within than he was without. If he had performed the miracles with his fingers only, he might have been proud of them ; but when they fell out of the infinity of his thinking, they were mere drops trembling on the bucket : they were as nothing before him. We might as well follow some poor breathing of ours and say, "Behold, how wonderful was that sighing in the wind !" It is nothing to us, because of the greater life. And these miracles are puzzles, enigmas, confounding surprises to people who will come to Christ, along the line which begins in the outward, in the visible, in the circumstantial. If ever they can get hold of his heart, and speak to him face to face for five minutes, they will feel the heaving of his great sympathetic bosom ; they will see the miracles as he saw them, then they will appear to be very little things, momentary spasms, examples to guide children through the grammar of a higher law, mere exemplifications, symbols, types of the infinite and the inexpressible.

It is very remarkable that this Man once said, "Greater works than these shall ye do ;" but I will ask you to find a passage in which he ever said, "Greater thoughts than these shall ye think." I cannot find such a passage. You must not forget *that* in your argument about Christ's divinity, when he piled up his miracles, raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, feeding the hungry

miraculously, unloosing dumb tongues and unstopping deaf ears ; when he aggregated them all into one sublime spectacle, he said, " Greater works than these shall ye do ;" but never did he say, " Greater thoughts than these shall ye think, greater words than these shall ye speak, greater purposes than these shall ye conceive." There he touched the unsearchable riches of his own nature, as in the miracles he pointed to circumstances and to events which would receive larger unfoldment as the ages went on.

Now let us look at this inner life of Christ, from two or three points. I watch this Man day by day, and I am struck with wonder at his amazing power, and the question arises, What is the impelling sense of his duty ? Why does he do these things ? And he answers, frankly, " Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?" Never did prophet give that explanation before. His working from his Father's point of view, in the light of his Father's will ; it is the paternal element that is moving him. He has given me that as his key ; I will put it into every lock of his life to see whether he has entrusted me with the proper key or not. I defy the world to find him wrong as to the use of this key. Put it where you like, the lock answers it ; and is no credit to be given to a Speaker who, at twelve years of age, took the key from off his girdle, put it into the hands of inquirers, and told them to go round the whole circle of his life with that key in their hands ? He was but a boy when he gave up that key—he was but twelve years old—approaching manhood by Jewish reckoning, but merely a child in years. Can he keep up the high strain ? Listen : " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." " I and my Father are one." Can he sustain that high key when he is in trouble ? Listen : " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Can he go higher still ? Listen : " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." O ye who know the modes of music, tell me, is this harmony ? The key-note is, " Father ;" away the Anthem rolls, high as heaven, deep as hell, tortuous as the paths of the forked lightning, and yet with infinite precision it returns to its initial note. Give Christ credit for this. He was but a Galilean peasant ; give him what honour is due for preserving his rhythmic consistency through a course, not rugged only, but most tragical and unparalleled.

Arguing from that point, another question suggests itself. If

this Man is about his Father's business, what is his supreme feeling? What answer would you expect to an inquiry like that, after the self-explanation which Jesus Christ has given? Is his supreme feeling a concern for the dignity of the law? Is he jealous with an infinite jealousy for the righteousness of God? Does he come forth from his hiding-place saying, "I am jealous for the holiness of my God; I must vindicate the righteousness of the Unseen and Eternal One?" No. What is the dominant feeling of this Man Christ Jesus? It is named again and again in the New Testament. No change ever occurs in the term, and I will ask you to say how far it corresponds with the first declaration, "Jesus was moved with compassion." Ye musicians, tell me if that be consonant and harmonious? "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Jesus was moved with compassion." It was always so; the word "compassion" occurs in no solitary instance alone, though its occurrence in one instance would still have been argument enough. But from beginning to end of his life he is moved with compassion. "Jesus, here are some thousands of people that have been with thee three days and have nothing to eat." Does he wait for us to say that? No. "But Jesus was moved with compassion when he remembered" that the multitudes were in that condition. Coming out once, and looking upon the crowds, "He was moved with compassion, for they were as sheep not having a shepherd." When he was walking after a funeral to the grave, "Jesus wept." And when people came to him they seemed to know this sympathetically, for they said, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon us, have compassion on us, thou Son of God." He speaks like a *Son*, and is thus faithful to a *Father's* message.

What explanation does he give of his own miracles? Once he gave us an explanation, as it were, incidentally and unconsciously, but we caught the word, and it saved us from unbelief and explained all mysteries. How was that long-ailing woman cured? "Virtue hath gone out of me." He did not say, "I have performed this with my fingers; this is an act of manipulation which no other man ever learned to do; it was by swiftness and suppleness and dexterity, and by a mysterious flashing of the fingers over certain parts of the affected body." No, but he perceived that virtue had gone out of him. No trickster, but a mighty

sympathiser,—no manipulator, but infinite in the exercise and processes of his redeeming power. Whatever he did took something out of him. Behold the difference between the artificial and the real. What did our redemption cost? The healing of one poor sufferer took “virtue” out of him. What did the redemption of the world take out of him when he said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The last pulse gone. Is he self-consistent still? Still!

And to what are all his triumphs eventually referred? To his *Soul*. Not to his intellectual ability—not to his skill of finger—not to his physical endurance, but to his *Soul*—an undefinable term, the symbol of an infinite quantity. “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” You know the meaning of the word in some degree. One man paints with paint—another paints with his soul. One is a clever mechanic—another an inborn and indestructible genius. One man speaks with his teeth and tongue and palate—another speaks with his soul: they use the same words, but not the same, as Hermon was not the same with the dew off; as the bush was not the same before the fire came into it. You say one man sings artificially, mechanically, correctly—every tone is right; the proper balance, the proper measure, the proper quantity: artificially the exercise is beyond criticism, but still the people sit unmoved. Another man takes up the same words and the same notes, and the people are stirred like Lebanon by a wind, like Bashan when the storm roars. How is it? The one man is artificial, the other is real—the one man has learned his lesson, the other man had the lesson awakened in him—it was there before, and an angel passed by and said, “It is morning: awake and sing.” This Christ, this dear Son of God, shall see of the travail of his soul, of the outgoing of his blood—he sows the earth with the red seed of his blood and he shall see the harvest and be satisfied. He was often wearied with his journeying: when was he wearied with his miracles? His bones were tired: when was his mind enfeebled? The instruments of articulation might be exhausted, but when did the word ever come with less than the old emphasis—the fiat that made the sun?

Let us now ask—*What did this man claim for himself?* It will assist us in our study if we hear from his own lips a distinct state-

ment of what he does claim on his own account. Reading in the book of Exodus about the great God, I find that he gave his name as "I AM," that he amplified that name into, "I AM THAT I AM." We could make nothing of that name ; it was too remote for us ; our genius had never been in such high regions, never scaled altitudes so perilous. We could therefore but wonder. The name sounded grandly ; it had in it all the boom of an infinite mystery, and we were content with it, because the condescensions which that same God made to this human life of ours were so mighty yet so pitiful, so wondrous in their sweep and yet so compassionate in their lingerings that we had begun to think, though the name was mysterious, the grace was familiar enough. A marvellous word was that spoken to Moses—"I AM;" it seemed as if it were *going to be* a revelation, but suddenly it returned upon itself, came back to its centre, and finished with—"THAT I AM!" As if the sun were just about to come from behind a great cloud, and suddenly, after one dazzling gleam, hide itself behind a cloud denser still. The fulness of the time had not yet come. God's "hour" was not yet. He had said, "I AM," but *what* he was he did not further say. By-and-by more will be said. It will be interesting, therefore, to inquire whether Jesus Christ connects himself with that mysterious name, "I AM THAT I AM." If I can trace his talking, his thinking, his preaching, so as to find one point in connection between himself and that great name, then a new and large argument will take its inception, and a new and subtle evidence will be put in that this Man was more than man—as mysterious as the Name, perhaps as gracious. Let us see.

I cannot read the life of Christ without constantly coming upon the expression, "I AM." Reading it, I say, I have met these words before, and wonder where. My memory bethinks itself, and I hasten back into the grey old pages of the ancient time, and find that the Lord revealed himself unto Moses as "I AM THAT I AM." I want to know, therefore, if this great ladder, the top of which is in heaven, can by any means find a place upon the earth ; can it come down that I may touch it ? Yes. Jesus adds to the "I AM" little words, simple earthly words, nursery terms, school ideas—brings down the "I AM" so that we may touch its lower meaning, and hear its earthly messages. It will, then,

be most interesting to see how this is done, and to listen to this modified music of the Eternal.

What does Jesus say after the words “I am?” He says everything that human fancy ever conceived concerning strength, and beauty, and sympathy, and tenderness, and redemption. He absorbs the whole. He leaves nothing for you and me except as secondary owners, except as those who derive their status and their lustre from himself. Thus, “I am . . . *the Vine*.” What a stoop! Could any but God have taken up that figure? Think it out. You have heard it until you have become familiar with it —forget your familiarity, think yourself back to the original line, and then consider that One has appeared in the human race, who says without reservation or qualification of any kind or degree, “I am the Vine.” Thus is the mysterious simplified; thus is the abstract turned into the concrete and the inner into the visible, the simple, and the approachable. Will he ever say “I am” again? Many a time. Let us hear him. “I am *the Light*.” Ah, we know what the light is; it is here, and there, and everywhere—takes up no room, yet fills all space; warms the planets, yet does not crush a twig. The “I am” fell upon us like a mighty thundering. “I am the Light” came to us like a child’s lesson in our mother’s nursery. Thus doth he incarnate or embody or personify himself—thus doth the ladder rest in the mean dust, whilst its head is lifted up above the pavilions of the stars.

Will he say “I am” any more? Often. How? Listen: “I am *the Door*. ” Dare any but himself have taken upon him so mean a figure? “Ah,” said he, “it is not a mean figure if you interpret it aright. A door is more than deal. A door is more than an arrangement swinging upon hinges. A door is Welcome, Hospitality, Approach, Home, Warmth, Honour, Sonship—I am the Door.” Still more: “I am *the Bread*, I am *the Water*, I am *the Good Shepherd*, I am *the Way*, I am *the Truth*, I am *the Life*. ” When I see how this Man absorbs all beauteous figures, all high and tender emblems, I begin to think that there is nothing left for us by which to distinguish ourselves figuratively and typically. If we take any of these words, they must be taken as with his signature upon them, having a first lien and a prior claim; we are but intermediary and temporary, and altogether

subordinate in our stewardship and right of status. How any man could be a man only, and yet take up these figures, it is impossible for me to believe. It is easier for me to say, "My Lord and my God," than to say, "Equal with me; better only in the accidents of the case."

Seeing that Christ claims so much for himself, it will be equally interesting, and will be the complement of the same subject, to start a second inquiry, namely, *What does he claim from men?* He claims everything. Sometimes in mean mood of soul I have wondered at his divine voracity. For once, a woman came to him who had only one box of spikenard, and he took it all. I was amazed—half distressed. I never saw such impoverishment made before. He did not say, "Give me part of it," but took it every whit, and the woman had no more left of that precious nard. Could you have done that? Would your *humanity* have allowed you to do it? Surely, you would have said, "Part of it,—just a little; you are so kind as to offer me a donation out of your one box of spikenard, let me take a little myself—I must not have it all." But this Man, what said he? He said, "Let her do it—I will have it all, substance and fragrance too." And another woman—she might have touched his heart as she came along, for she was poor and poorly clothed, and had on a widow's weeds—I expected that he would have said, "Poor woman, we cannot take anything from you." No; she came along, took out her two mites, which make one farthing, put them in, and he took them both! Is he man? Is that humanity? Strange man; marvellous exceeding above all other men; not only did he take them, but he said, "She hath done more than anybody else who came up to the treasury: she hath cast in all her living."

Is he doing the selfsame thing in our own day? Verily he is! Look at this family, father and mother, with a boy and a girl as their sweet children. How many things has that boy been, in his father's hopeful dreams! A lawyer and a judge; then a clergyman and a bishop; then a merchant, a politician, a statesman, and a prime minister! But one day the mother says that she feels "something is going to happen;" a vague expression, but full of deep and sad meaning to her own soul. She tells her husband that "something is going to happen," and he smiles at the shapeless and nameless fear. And what does happen? A proposal

that the boy should become a *missionary*! What! the only son? Yes! "It cannot be," says the stunned father; "no, no, it must not be." For many an hour there is silence; ay, for days next to nothing is said, but many a wistful look is exchanged. At length the mother says, "I have been thinking and praying about this, and I remember that good Mr. Wesley used to open the Bible to see what answer God sent him to his prayers, and I have got my answer to-day. After prayer I opened the Bible, and my eyes could see no other words but these: 'Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.' *He must go.*" The father is silent. A great weight of grief burdens his heart. He, too, goes to pray—goes a hale man under fifty—comes back in an hour an old man, crushed, blanched, withered, and grey, "but more than conqueror," and he, too, says the child—the one son, the heir, the first-born—*must go*. And Christ takes him! Humanity would have spared him when so many large families could have furnished a missionary, but *God* takes him; the God that took the spikenard and the mites.

It will be curious and interesting now to start a third inquiry to this effect: *How did the people who were round about, and who were not malignantly disposed, who constituted the better class of His contemporaries, regard Christ?* Here is one typical man—a man of letters and of local renown, careful and exact in speech, somewhat timid in disposition, yet marked by that peculiar timidity which is capable of assuming the most startling boldness. He climbs his way up to Christ, opens the door in the dark, goes up to him, and says in an undertone, lest the enemy should hear—"Rabbi, thou art a teacher come from God." Evidence of that kind must not go for nothing. Send men of another type of mind to him—men of the world, shrewd, keen men. Here are several of them returning from an interview with the Son of God. I hail them in English terms, and say, "Gentlemen, what say you?" "Never man spake like this Man." Add that to the evidence of Nicodemus. Here are women coming back from having seen the Lord; tears are in their eyes. What will they say? Never yet did woman speak one word against the Son of God! Mothers, did you see anything to blame? "Nothing." Women of pure soul—sensitive as keenest life—what saw ye? "The Holiness of God." Pass him on to a judge—cold, dispassionate, obser-

vant, not easily hoodwinked. What sayest thou, Roman judge? "I find no fault in him." What is that coming to the man now, while he is talking? A message. What saith the message? It is a message from the judge's wife. "Have thou nothing to do with this just person, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream concerning him." Let him go—nail his right hand, nail his left hand, nail his feet, lift high the dreadful tree, crush it into the rock, shake every nerve and fibre of his poor body, let him writhe in his last agony, and will anybody speak about him then? Yes. The centurion beholding this, accustomed to the sight of blood, knowing how men deport themselves in judgment halls and in prisons and in the supreme crisis of existence, said—"Truly this Man was the Son of God." Observe what he claimed for himself—what he claimed from others. Put these testimonies of observers one after the other, accumulate them into a complete appeal, and then say whether it be not easier to the imagination and the heart and the judgment to say, "My Lord and my God," than to use meaner terms.

Another question arises : *From such a Man what teaching may be expected?* Given, a man distinguished by such attributes and elements as I have endeavoured simply to indicate, to find out what kind or manner of teaching and public ministry we may expect from him. I shall first expect *extemporaneousness*. He cannot want time to make his sermons, or he is not the man he claims to be. He is not an essayist. He will not be a literary speaker ; there will be a peculiarity, a uniqueness, a personality about him not to be found elsewhere. Does he retire to his study, that he may write out elaborate sentences full of nothing but ink ? Will he come before me as a literary artist, with well-poised sentences, beautiful periods, sounding climaxes, leaving the impression that he has wasted the midnight oil, and taken infinite pains to please those who went to hear him ? There is nothing literary about the style of Christ ; it is simple, graphic talk, much broken to our minds, occasionally incoherent, rapid in transitions, utterly wanting in all elaboration, and the balance prized by men who have nothing else to do than to live by their folly. I shall further expect *instantaneousness of reply* by Christ Jesus if He be God. God cannot want time to think what he will say. Does this Man ever ask for time ; does he ever adjourn the interview ?

He answers immediately, and he answers finally. He never asks for time to bethink himself, to refer to the authorities, to consult and connote the precedents. He does not say, “ You have posed me by an unexpected question ; I must retire and give this inquiry my profoundest consideration.” Never ; and he was but a carpenter. He had just thrown the apron from his waist ; he was but a peasant. Rabbinical culture he had none, high connection disdained the mention of his name, and yet there was an instantaneousness about him to which I can find no parallel but in the “ Let there be light, and there was light.” Give every man credit for his ability ; give this Man, carpenter and peasant of Galilee, credit for having extorted from his enemies the acknowledgment, “ Never man spake like this Man.”

What do I find in this Man’s teaching ? High allegory, types of things unseen, incarnations of the spiritual, embodiments of the invisible, parables beautiful as pictures, wide as philosophies, lasting as essential truth. Strange man—marvellous productions of a barren soil. Why, he himself was an incarnation. What was his ministry ? An incarnation too. What had he to do with the men who heard him, and all succeeding generations ? He had to embody, to physicalise and bodily typify the kingdom of God : hence he said, “ It is like a grain of mustard seed ; like a net cast into the sea ; like treasure hid in a field ; like leaven hid in three measures of meal.” “ It is like unto”—when he said that, what did he do ? He repeated his own birth. He renewed his own incarnation, he was born again in every parable that escaped his lips. To embody the bodiless, to typify in allegory and figure the infinite and the inexpressible, was the all-culminating miracle of this peasant of Galilee. Then I ask myself, “ Is it consistent with all I have heard about him ?” And I am compelled to say it is exquisitely in consonance with all we have yet seen of His character and studied of His speech. A Man like this coming up from unbeginning time must be extemporaneous in his speech, instantaneous in his reply, and allegorical and typical and symbolical in his method of presenting truth, for he knows the essential, and alone can give it beauty and expression, and movement and colour. Give him the credit due to his power !

Jesus Christ’s is the kind of teaching that survives all the changes of time. It is seminal teaching ; it is not like a full-

blown garden, it is like treasures of living seeds and roots, and therefore it abides for ever. Where are the grand and stately and polished sermons of the great doctors of the Church? Do you know? I do not. But they were grand, were they not? Why didn't you keep them then? But they were stately, majestic, complete, cathedral-like, strong in base, exquisite in pinnacle, almost fluttering in the delicacy of their architecture; indeed, why didn't you take better care of them? Where are they? Gone into a stately past—majestic shadows of a majestic oblivion. What lives? Suggestiveness, what is called incoherence, want of finish, want of polish; the great mighty oak, the everlasting Bashan; not the cabinet-makers' pretty and expensive fabrication.

Now I will come to the final point, and it shall be of the utmost severity in its relation to this argument. The question I put is this: *Did this Man Christ Jesus live up to his own principles?* I can imagine persons of a certain kind of mind suggesting that the speeches and parables, and conversations generally of Jesus Christ, conveyed very high theories, very sublime philosophies of things, but were too romantic to be embodied in actual behaviour. The question I press upon you is this, so far as the evidence in the Book goes, Did this Man Christ Jesus embody his own doctrine? What said he? "Bless them that persecute you." Did he do it? Let one of his disciples answer. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." What said he? "Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Did he do it? One of his historians says that in his last agony he prayed, when he had no hand to stretch out upward to his God, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Is this to go for nothing? Are we at liberty to dismiss this witness and say he does not know of that which he testifies, or that which he affirms? Be careful, for if you cannot confer a character you have no right to take one away.

I call you to this living Christ; I will try to go nearer to him than ever I have been before; I will call for him to come nearer to me, and I will press still nearer. He knows me, he speaks to me, there is a masonry between us for which you have no word or symbol: a grip of the hand he only can give, a symbol that hath morning in it, and hope and immortality, secret messages, transmissions in cipher which he makes the devil himself bring. Can

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I give him up? Can I sell him for thirty pieces of silver? Can I exchange him for some other master? Oh, then the sun would bring no morning with it, mid-day would be but a great black cloud, and the summer a mocking promise without an answer. To whom, then, could I tell my sin; to whom could I pray my prayers; to whom could I empty my heart in darkness and in close and absolute solitude, after I have looked all round the horizon to see even if an angel be there to watch the secret interview? Nay, I must serve him still, preach him still, and if he say to me, "Wilt thou go away?" I will answer in words I cannot amend, "To whom can I go? Thou only hast the words of Eternal Life!"

## P R A Y E R .

O THAT this day we might see the Lord and have our whole mind filled with his light and joy ! Lord, dost thou ask us what we would have at thine hands ? Our answer is, Lord, that we might receive our sight ! When men cry unto the Lord in their trouble, thou dost deliver them out of their distresses ; in this hope we come now before the Lord, and even whilst we speak our hearts feel the burden rising. Sweet is the day of the Lord, quiet and tender in its sacred peacefulness, opening into the very heavens and showing us the New Jerusalem as the city in which we shall no more be threatened by fear and humbled by weariness. For every blessing we offer thee our praise. Thou didst lead us through the solitary way, and thou hast spared us from the shadow of death. Our souls are thine , our bodies are thy habitation. Thou are mindful of us with great care, and thy banner over us is love. O that we knew how to praise thee aright, that our hearts might not suffer pain because of the weariness of our worship. Thy judgments are very terrible, but thy mercies are greater still. Our life is full of the mercy of the Lord, and our days are made bright by his goodness. Lord, let not our feet stray from the path of thy will. Lord, comfort us, encourage our souls in the day of fear, and let our weakness hide itself in thy great power. We lay down our own wisdom as ignorance, and run away from our towers as from defences that will crush the life that built them. We come to Jesus. We stand beside the Saviour. We know the power of his blood. Lord, help us. Lord, send upon us the blessing of thine infinite pardon. Lord, show us the light of thy face. We daily see how great a gift is life ; we know it not, we have not seen the divine secret, we feel the pulse beat, but we see not the power by which it is moved. We are our own mysteries. Life itself is a religion. Life is a continual prayer. How weak we are, yet how strong ! We cannot just now bear the full daylight, yet we shall pass the sun on our upward way to the glory to come, and his great lustre shall be as a spark vanishing in the ever-enlarging vastness of thy universe. When we think thus of thy kingdom our light affliction is but for a moment. Thy kingdom, Lord, how great, how bright, how strong ! May we one and all have a place in that everlasting house. Thy mercy is greater than our prayer, and therefore do we hope even where we cannot reason. Send the gospel to our lost ones, and bring our wanderers home. Visit our sick chambers and whisper to our sick ones the messages of consolation, so that their very weakness may itself

become a privilege, and their loneliness become the sanctuary within which thou wilt meet them. We put our own life into thy keeping. We lay aside our own poor help as a temptation, and we accept thy strength as our perfect ability. O thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when shall we be wholly swallowed up in thy great love ! When will the devil leave us, and none but holy angels be at hand ! How long the tempter tarries ! He wears out our strength ; he lures our fancy ; he vexes our prayers ; he tortures our very communion with thyself. Jesus of the wilderness, Jesus of Calvary, help us or the enemy will prevail. He is so strong, so swift, so wise ; yet we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us, therefore do we pray—Jesus, save us, or we perish ! Amen.

### BREAD AND WATER.

"I am the bread . . . I am the water."—JOHN vi. 35, etc.

**T**HE subject is clearly, Bread and Water. You call these common things, and my object will be to show that their commonness is not a defect, but an excellence ; that their very excellence has occasioned their commonness ; and that their commonness corresponds to a common want in the constitution of mankind. I will take the simple idea of bread and water, and apply it socially in the first place and trace it upward to its highest and divinest meaning.

Let us look in upon the greatest feast ever spread for the refreshment and delight of kings. All delicacies shall be there that can be found in wood and air and sea : the richest wines shall sparkle and foam and glow upon the sumptuous board ; and the fragrances arising from this luxurious feast shall excite and regale the appetite of hungry men. Now what have we there ? What is the fundamental idea ? What is the nucleus of the abounding and tempting feast ? Surprising as it may seem, the whole thing is but an adaptation of bread and water ! It is bread and water decorated ; bread and water more or less adulterated ; bread and water supposed to be at their best as to refinement, and richness, and power of gastronomic temptation and satisfaction. And if you could follow the sated guests into their privacy you would hear them say, in effect, "All this fine living is well enough now and then, but only now and then, after all ; let us have something plain and substantial," in a word, let them have bread and water. What is

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this prodigious art of the high cook? He is bound, like other popular slaves, to produce something fresh; without novelty he sinks into a common baker; a new relish may mean a new fortune; a new gravy may give him a country house and a footman; a new adaptation of an omelette may enable him to start a shooting box,—but it is bread and water that he works upon; bread and water are the basis of his fortune; he lives by mystifying the public, and mightily laughs at the trick by which he has made men think that bread crumbs have some connection with far-off spice groves and Ceylon breezes. Offer your guests plain bread and water, and they will not often call your way; but dress up the bread and water, torture them, colour them, spice them, and they will praise the delicacy and excellence of the viands. But bread and water survive! These are the things that cannot be shaken. Empires of soups and entrees, wines and liqueurs, rise and fall, but the steady old friends bread and water remain as the unadorned and ever wholesome gifts of God. Ay, poor cook, clever trickster, half a creator, under all thy enchantments and wizardries there are the plain bread and water; disguise them, bribe them, paint them, and wreath around them all manner of cunning ornamentation, they are but bread and water; the image and the superscription are the cook's, but the bread and water themselves are God's! Name the dishes that delighted Babylonian gluttons, and rehearse the menu which made the Egyptian *gourmands* smack their sensual lips; you cannot; these are forgotten delights, paste-boards that perished in the fire; but bread and water come steadily along the ages, over the graves of empires and the ashes of royalty, having escaped the tortures of the cruellest cooks and shown themselves to be the primary and necessary gifts of God.

Well, the application of this is obvious in higher spheres of life, such, for example, as the culture and satisfaction of the intellect. Reading and writing are the bread and water of the mind. Give a child the power of reading and writing and let him do the rest for himself; it is worth doing (at least some of it), and let him find it out and he will value it the more. Your duty is done in giving the reading and the writing, the intellectual bread and water. But fine cookery is imitated in fine intelligence and with like results in some cases, namely mental indigestion and ill-

health. Hence, we have imperfect French, caricatured German, and murdered music, and the native tongue and the native history are passed by as quite secondary if not beneath contempt. It is better to chatter French in a way which nobody can understand than to speak good plain exact English, is it not? We must be fine at all costs. We must have a few knick-knacks on the mantelpiece, even if we have not a bed to sleep on. We must be able to say, *Parlez-vous Française* even if we cannot pay our debts. When will people learn to prize bread and water? When will they see that it is better to know a little well, than to know next to nothing about a good deal? O when? This is not a little matter, it is a matter of great importance, from the fact that it is an index of character. I do not laugh at a man whose learning ends at the multiplication table, but I may laugh with grim amusement at a man who speaks hotel French and then spells October with an *h*. Give your children intellectual bread and water without grudging, that is to say, give them a thorough grounding in the beginnings and elements of knowledge, and let them do the rest for themselves.

These illustrations prepare the way for the highest truth of all, namely, that Jesus Christ is the bread and water without which we cannot live. He never says he is a high delicacy, a rare luxury, a feast which the rich alone can afford ; he says that he is bread and water, he likens himself not to the luxuries but to the necessaries of life, and in so doing he shows a wisdom, a reach of mind, a grasp of human nature, which should save him from the attacks of malignant men. An adventurer would not have seen in metaphors so humble a philosophy so profound. Adventurers like big words and glaring figures ; they speak great swelling words of vanity ; they search heaven and earth for effective figures ; they disdain the sling and the stone. Not so with Jesus Christ ; he is Bread, he is Water, he is Light, he is the Door, he is the Shepherd, and these words, so simple, stretch their meaning around the whole circle of human life, and by their choice alone is the supreme wisdom of Jesus Christ abundantly attested.

Let us go further into this matter by a little detailed inquiry and illustration.

i. Man needs Jesus Christ as a necessity and not as a luxury. You may be pleased to have flowers, but you must have bread.

Christ presents himself as exactly fulfilling this analogy. Our whole life is based on one or two simple but necessary lines ; we must have *food*, we must have *shelter*, we must have *security*. But into how many glorifications have all these simple necessities passed ! We have just spoken about food. Now look at *shelter*, how styles of architecture have grown out of that idea ! We talk of Doric, and Grecian, and Gothic ; of Norman arches and Corinthian capitals ; and indeed we have a long and perplexing nomenclature, all coming out of the fact that man must have a place to go into when the weather is rough and when sleep is needed. Out of the need of shelter has come the science or art of architecture ! Is this wrong ? Most certainly not. It is a trait of civilisation. It is a sign of refinement and progress. But let an architect of high fancy be called in to build you a house, he gives you a fine elevation, a noble porch, a splendid dome ; but in the fever of his fancy he has forgotten the foundations, overlooked the drainage, omitted the joists, and made no provision for the escape of the smoke. How then ? Of what avail is it that there is much elaboration of cunning masonry on the front of the house ? You could have done without the stone faces above the mullions, but you cannot do without the chimneys and the joists. It is exactly after the bearing of this analogy that Jesus Christ has often been presented in preaching and in books. He has been offered as an ornament merely. He has been preached as the most curious and entertaining of all riddles. He has been treated as the successor of Plato, or Solon, or Seneca. In this way, generally indeed intended to be respectful, the whole purpose of his coming into the world has been overlooked. He has not been presented as bread and water, or the very first and most indispensable necessity of life ; he has been treated as a phenomenon ; cabineted as a rarity in human history ; labelled as a remarkable specimen ; and in this way even some of his admirers have ignorantly betrayed and dishonoured the Lord. Jesus is not a phenomenon, he is bread : Christ is not a curiosity, he is water. As surely as we cannot live without bread we cannot live truly without Christ ; if we know not Christ we are not living, our movement is a mechanical flutter, our pulse is but the stirring of an animal life. It is in this way, then, that Jesus Christ is to be preached. It is even so I would preach him now. I would call him the water of

life ; I would speak of him as the true bread sent down from heaven ; I would tell men that it is impossible to live without him ; I would say, with heightening passion, with glowing and ineffable love, that he only, even the holy Christ of God, can satisfy the hunger and the thirst of the soul of man. In this way I claim a distinct vocation as a preacher. I am not one amongst many who try to do the world good ; as a Christian preacher, or a preacher of Christ, I offer the *only* thing that can vitally and sufficiently touch the world's condition, and thus the position of the Christian preacher is absolutely without similitude or parallel, in that the choice he offers is life or death, salvation or ruin, heaven or hell.

2. What has been the effect of omitting to declare Christ simply as bread and water ? Leaving the simplicity of Christ we have elaborated theological sciences, established and promulgated with solemn sanctions the most intricate creeds ; we have worked out a very high and cunning symbolism ; we have filled the church with incense, with garments of many colours and many significances, ceremony after ceremony we have contrived ; we have called councils, synods, and congresses ; we have constituted splendid hierarchies, with mitres and crooks, and clothing precious with gold and glaring with ardent colour. All this have we done, O Son of God, though thou didst call thyself bread and water ! We have gathered around thee liturgies and suffrages and gowns and bands and surplices and chants and censers and albs and stoles and chasubles, though thou didst call thyself Bread and Water ! We have drawn a long and often mutinous procession of reverends and most reverends and right reverends and very reverends, and doctors and deans and eminences and holinesses and suffragans and novices and licentiates, though thou didst call thyself bread and water ! Horrible, indeed, and quite infinite is the contemptibleness of all this, and shall I not even say the sin ? Suppose some inquiring stranger looking on and asking, What does all this mean ? I should answer, not without sharpness and indignation, It means that man is a fool, and that he prefers vanity to truth. This is not the Saviour. This is not the way to God. This is not the door of heaven. This is incubus and rubbish and abomination. Christ is bread ; Christ is water ; Christ is the one answer to thy difficulties, the one healer of thy wounds, the one Saviour of thy

soul. Oh, but the curse of this mischief is terrible to contemplate ! Poor souls are left to believe that they can only get to Christ by seeing ministers and priests and bishops, by learning catechisms, by swallowing dogmas they neither understand nor appreciate, and by listening to the mumbling and muttering of certain ecclesiastical men in livery. Oh the horribleness ! Oh the blasphemy ! Is not the devil laughing the while and filling his cruel hand with additional prey ? My friend, man eager to know the truth, Christ is bread ; Christ is water ; he is nigh thee ; take the pure Bible and read it for thyself, read it in solitude, read it with earnest desire to know its living claim upon thyself, and thou shalt see the Lord, and feel the Cross, and eat the heavenly bread.

3. History furnishes a most graphic confirmation of these views. John Stuart Mill says, " Let rational criticism take from us what it may, it still leaves us the Christ." Exactly so ; it still leaves us the bread and water ! It still leaves us all we want. It takes away all human conceits and decorations, and it leaves the living bread. It mortifies the theological cook and confectioner, it humbles the decorator of tables, but it leaves the living water ! Theological revolutions have come and theological revolutions have gone ; timid souls have trembled as if the sanctuary had been destroyed, but when the noise has passed and the cloud has rolled off, behold the bread and water remain, and Welcome is written on the tables of the Lord ! Men cannot get rid of Christ simply because they cannot get rid of themselves. Marvellous is it to watch how the Lord allows the chaff to blow away, but saves every grain of the precious wheat ; and quite marvellous, too, is it to see how some nervous people think that the wheat is lost because the chaff has been scattered by the wind. The Lord will lose nothing. Society revolutionises itself, but society still lives. Theologies, eastern and western, wear themselves out, but the bread and water are still there, incorruptible and unlimited. Do we fear the dissolution of the earth because an owl's nest has fallen ? Will the sun not rise to-morrow because a candle has been blown out ? Bethink thee, faithless soul, they are but accidents that change, the essentials abide,

" Unhurt amid the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds."

I fancy we should change our standpoint in viewing all the revolutions and disasters that occurred within the limits of Christendom. Hitherto we have thought of them as the results of intellectual pride or spiritual insubordination. We have mourned over men as fallen creatures because they have risen against the systems in which they were reared. But possibly we are wrong. It may be Christ himself who is at work. He is the great Revolutionist. This may be Christ's own way of clearing off the rubbish which has been piled upon his holy name. Christ pulls down papacies and hierarchies and rituals, that he may show that these are not needful, that all human contrivances are departures from his Divine simplicity, and that he wishes to be known through all ages and amongst all men as the Bread and Water of human souls. He knows that our temptation is to make more of externals than of realities, hence he turns his providence against us, hurls down our cathedrals and temples and ministers, and says he will be known only as Bread and Water, not as a compound of coloured and poisonous confection. O the deceitfulness of the human heart in this matter of serving Christ ! We tell lies to ourselves about it. We talk about enriching our services, ennobling our architecture, educating our ministers, creating universities, founding endowments, originating retreats of elegant leisure for the production of technical literature. Rubbish, all of it ! Christ asks nothing of the kind at our hands. He prefers his own *Spirit* to our *culture*. "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord. "Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting." What, then, are we to do ? "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil, learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Thus we are driven back to simplicity ; our "culture" is thrown down and dashed to pieces as a potter's vessel, and nothing stands but the bread and the water, the first verities, the essential graces, of the Lord's Christ.

I care not how rich our music, how noble our architecture, how imposing our method of worship, if all this be kept strictly in its proper place. I love beauty ; I am moved to passion and heroism

by inspiring music ; I would make the Lord's house glad with every expression of love ; but this done, I would write on the doorposts, on the roof, and on every panel, the words of Jesus : " In this place is one greater than the temple." I prefer knowledge to ignorance, but I prefer holiness to either. Culture, when not a chattering and fussy prig, may be right noble and even majestic ; but nothing is so cold as culture, and nothing so mean, when not inflamed and impassioned by the Spirit of Christ. To-day the pulpit is in danger of being killed by miscalled *culture*. Men think that because they have been to college five years they ought to be preachers, which is as logical as to say that a man who has driven an omnibus five years ought to be able to take a ship across the Atlantic. The Lord continually dashes these culture-pots to pieces like a potter's vessel, by making preachers of his own, and clothing them with mysterious but most beneficent power.

We must go back to bread and water. Our dainties must be given up. Our habits are too luxurious ; we are killing our souls with sweet poisons ; we are, by our fabrications and masonries and fine fancies, exalting ourselves above the Lord ; so I would call myself back to the simplicity of Christ, and find all I want in his grace and truth.

## P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have come up out of the world into the church, a holy and chosen place, to make mention of thy goodness, to recall thy mercies, to meditate upon thy word and to have our spiritual strength renewed. We have also come up to the Cross that we may have our sins taken away, not by ministry of man, nor by ceremonial of church, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We bless thee that the Cross is more than our guilt—that the blood of Christ abounds where our sin abounded once, and that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the King, is able to destroy our sin and to cause it to be remembered no more for ever. We love the Saviour—we love him most when our torment is intolerable : it is then we see what he really did as the atonement and the propitiation for the sins of the world. We love his words—we love the tones of his voice, we love the smiling of his gentle face : but oh what words can tell the depth and passion of our love when we see our sin as it really is, and we feel our helplessness, and then behold the outstretched Priest, the dying Sacrifice. It is then our hope returns, and then doth our heart glow with fire from Heaven.

We rejoice that we care for thy word and for thy worship : this feeling elevates our whole nature, brings up our entire strength to its finest energy, and enables us with triumph, with holy scorn, to stand above the temptations and the lures of this world and all that is lowest in our own life, and to seize the enjoyments and securities of heaven. Thy word clears the future—it levels the hill that keeps away from our vision the delights and the beauties of the Coming Land. It levels up the deep places and overbridges the yawning chasms and gulfs, that we may reach towards the heavenly and eternal. Lord, evermore show us the meaning of thy word—may it be to us a word of ever-enlarging significance. We can never fully realise all its purpose—its sacredness will be an eternal mystery ; still may we be drawn forward by that great, kind, loving word to some deeper knowledge and some higher excellence.

We are tired of ourselves—the world is a weariness to us—its prizes are deceits, its delights are mockeries : it draws us forward by many a fascination only that it may sting us with many a disappointment. Behold the earth under our feet is hollow as a tomb that is waiting to enclose the living. There is nothing true but God : there is nothing lasting but thy light—there is nothing sufficient but thy grace. Thou hast placed us in this world of beginnings and shadows and alphabets—forbid that we

should regard it as the only world ; help us to look upon it as a porch to the universe, the opening of the infinite spaces and liberties of thy kingdom. And thus seizing the present, we shall hold it with a light hand, and reserve our veneration and our loyalty for things eternal and complete.

We desire as heads of houses to bless thee : bread has been upon our table and our cup has overrun. Thou hast defended our habitations, thou hast been merciful to every member of the household ; the master and the servant bless thee, the old man and his grandchild thank the same God. Receive therefore our homage as heads of houses, members of families, fathers, mothers, children, servants—may we unite in singing high psalms, may our hearts find an outgoing in the same hallowed supplication. Wherein we have suffered, help us to see the Lord's hand in it : suffer us not to look upon our disappointments as complete in themselves : may we look upon life as a whole, see the relation of its various parts, feel that no one member of it is complete in itself—may we measure all things by the eternal, may we desire the decisions and judgments of God, and not the conclusions of our own false understanding. Help us in all things to resign our life, our will, our work into thy hands, thou King of kings, thou Lord of lords.

Whether our days be few or many we cannot tell—we would not know. The Son of Man must come when he pleases, not when we desire : may we be ready for his coming with welcomes, with the entire hospitality and bounding delights and desires of our expectant souls, so that he may have a full incoming into the habitations of our hearts. We put all our concerns into thine hands—the letter difficult to answer, the appeal for which we have no present response, the sorrow for which we have not yet found a balm, the tears that scald us in their running, the life that is ebbing away, the business that seems to be receding from us notwithstanding our patience and industry—we put our whole case into thine hands, saying, “ Undertake for us, lead us as thou wilt.”

Now let us continue thy praise with increasing delight, search into the mysteries of thy word as men search in fields in which pearls are hidden, in which silver is to be found,—and thus may the morning worship and meditation make us strong for the contests and the endurance of the coming week. Amen.

### THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.

“ The precious blood of Christ.”—I PETER i. 19.

**M**Y heart's desire, ever since I became a preacher of the Holy Word, has been to make known to men that there is no salvation but by blood, and not by blood only, but by the particular blood named in the text—even the precious blood of

Christ. I am afraid that in these latter days some of us have tried to find out some other word to use instead of this word *blood*. We shrink from it. A dainty piety has forced upon us a dainty vocabulary. As the intensity of our love has gone down, the intensity of our speech has gone down along with it. We speak of the *life* of Christ and the *love* of Christ, but we too seldom speak of the precious *blood* of Christ ; that would seem to our frigid piety to be an exaggeration, and our frigid piety is encouraged by our deceitful fancy, that tells us that love is a larger term than blood, and should always be used instead of it. Beware of the temptations of a worldly fancy. If your piety become the creature or the plaything of your imagination, you will commit the keeping of your soul to the most capricious and the most irresponsible of all powers. We need some term that lies away infinitely beyond the airy and cloudy region of fancy ; a broad and emphatic word—a word that carries its own single and definite meaning so plainly that mistake is impossible, and that sacred and inviolable term is *blood*. The world over, that word has but one meaning. Even the word *love* may be tortured into ambiguity by men skilful in definition, but the word *blood* is too simple, too energetic, too solemn, to take upon it the faintest gloss of the most reluctant expositor. It is blood ; it is precious blood ; it is the blood of Christ ; it is the blood that cleanseth from all sin ; and to attemper its passion by the use of supposed equivalents, is to trifle with the supreme purpose of God in seeking the salvation of mankind. In a case like this, even reverent paraphrase is in danger of becoming almost profane. What other word can take the place of the word *blood* ? Even *love* itself is a word with many aliases, or a word which admits of many changes and partial substitutes : it is *regard*, it is *affection*, it is *sympathy*, it is *fondness*, it is *friendship*, it is *trust*—but how will you replace the word *blood* ? It stands alone. It will not clothe itself in the disguises of various terms. Its unquenchable ardour burns through the snow which you scatter upon its summit. No winter can loiter upon those ardent slopes. If you mean to tax your fancy for the production of equal terms, you must go elsewhere, for the term *blood* can accept no humiliation and pander to no disguise.

I. We are sometimes asked to admit that it cannot be what is called real, literal, or merely physical blood. Why should it not

be real blood, the actual blood of the actual body? Let us take care lest our vulgar conceptions deprive us of gracious meanings and privileges. It may be our notion that is at fault, and not the Word of God. The reference is unquestionably to the real blood of Jesus Christ, " who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Who shall say that his bodily blood was limited, and could therefore have but limited application? Verily herein we are straitened, not in Christ, but in ourselves; yes, even in the very imagination which is supposed to create for itself such wide liberty! If the people could find no limit in the handful of bread with which Christ satisfied the throng, as the poor woman could find no limit to the oil blessed by the prophet, who shall take upon him to say that it was a shallow and measurable stream that flowed from the heart of Christ? Did he not work miracles upon his own body? Did he not conceal it? Did he not cause it to pass untouched and unhurt through the angry host upon the hill? Did he not keep it from sinking in the sea? And can he not crown these wonders by giving us his blood to drink? " How can this man give us his blood to drink?" We never could tell *how* Christ did his mighty works, but, praised be his sweet and tender name, dear Jesus, Heart of God, he *did* them, and therein is our joy satisfied! Oh, my brethren, to me the controversy is mean which contends that Christ does not give us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, in the sacred ordinance of the Supper. He who maintains the contrary can make the vulgar stare by his tricks in the use of words, and can impale on harmless horns the argument which he opposes, but he has never plumbed the depths of Christ's power, he has never known what alone can appease the heart's violence of grief, nor has he entered into the holiest of all, wherein the corruptible letter clothes itself with the incorruptible spirit. When my heart is stung to death by its own remorse on account of sin, when hell is moved from beneath to receive me as fit only for its devouring flames, I am in no mood to be satisfied with types and symbols; a *real want* demands a *real remedy*; a real sinner calls for a real Saviour, and real sin can be met only by real blood: in that infinite distress you must not meet me with etymologies and verbal dexterities, you must let the tormented soul have free access to the precious blood of Christ. I know well that the literalist can vex me with truisms, and confound my poor

learning by his brilliant ignorance ; he can tauntingly ask me, How can this man give you his blood to drink ? and I have no answer in words ; he entangles me in the thicket of his alphabet and holds me as his prey, but deep down in the contrite heart, in the solemn sanctuaries never defiled by common speech, I know that Christ's word is better than man's, when he says, “ Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” If you ask me whether a morsel of sacramental bread is the actual body of Christ, my senses combine in a unanimous protest against an absurdity so manifest ; but in this holy exercise I do not walk by sight, but by faith ; my senses have slain me aforetime, so that I cannot allow them to usurp a function they have so disastrously abused ; I will not allow them to speak in this sanctuary ; they can but degrade its sacredness ; they have been liars from the beginning, and in all heavenly mysteries they are liars still,—I will listen only to the voice of the dying, mighty, holy, infinite Saviour—“ Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed ; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him.”

By no priestly incantation is common bread transformed into the body of Christ. I know nothing of sacerdotal magic. My soul resents with horror too solemn to be merely contemptuous the suggestion that priestly wizardry is needful to my participation in the blood of Christ. But this is my faith, the faith that brings things of heaven near, the faith that consecrates the very dust of earth, that if in the burning agony of my contrition, shame, and helplessness I put forth a trembling hand, and seize the common bread which makes the body live, and eat it for love of Christ, it will be to me the very flesh of the Son of God, a real appropriation, a holy sacrament, foolishness to the cold low world, but wisdom divine and comfort infinite to the hungering and dying heart. I will then know, not by some intellectual feat, the deep meaning of Christ's words : “ This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which cometh down from heaven ; if a man eat of this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

2. We need what is truly called a *realising* faith as well as a

spiritualising power. We are sometimes under the spell of two voices, and hardly know to which to yield. The one voice says, Spiritualise everything ; clothe the stones of the field with mystic meanings ; fill the winds with voices from worlds unknown ; and turn the stars into eyes of holy watchers not yet named of man. The other voice says, Beware of making the simple mysterious ; avoid the attenuation which destroys solid meanings ; take the very first signification that occurs to the earnest mind, and suspect all explanations that are far to seek. These contrary voices make themselves distinctly heard in the interpretation of this text : the one voice exhorts us to escape the narrowness of a literal meaning, and the other exhorts us not to lose the real and the true in some vain search for the speculative and the doubtful. A realising faith does not make things less, it makes them more vivid, it sets them before the eyes with true naturalness, and constrains their hidden meaning into bold and noble expression. I would, then, pray to have a *realising* faith when I think of the blood of Christ ; the life-blood ; the blood that cleanses from all sin ; the blood of sprinkling ; the blood of atonement ; the blood of the everlasting covenant. I would see it as blood. The grossness is not in the blood, it is in myself. The blood is holy. Is there aught in the great universe *so* holy as the blood of Christ ? But we cannot realise the blood until we have realised the sin. Where there is no conviction of sin—conviction amounting to the very anguish of the lost in hell—there can be no felt need of so extreme a remedy as is offered by the outpouring of the blood of Christ. A self-palliating iniquity may be cleansed by water. The light dust which bespots the outer garment may be removed by gentle means. When a man feels that he has not sinned *deeply* he is in no mood to receive what he considers the tragic appeals of the gospel ; they exceed the case ; they destroy themselves by exaggeration ; they speak with self-defeating violence. But let another kind of action be set up in the heart ; let the man be brought to talk thus with himself—“ I have sinned until my very soul is thrust down into hell ; my sins have clouded out the mercy of God, so that I see it no longer ; I have wounded the Almighty, I have cut myself off from the fountain of life, I have blown out every light that was meant to help me upward, I am undone, lost, damned,”—and *then*, he needs no painted cross, no typical sacra-

ment, no ceremonial attitude, no priestly enchantment, he can be met by nothing but the sacrificial blood, the personal blood, the living blood, the precious blood of Christ.

How far it is possible to sustain in constant experience those keen and vivid realisations of the blood of Christ is known to us all. Considering the infirmities of the flesh, the deceitfulness of the world, the subtle and persistent temptations of the enemy, the continual vexations, anxieties, frets, and chafings of a life that is one daily struggle, it is not too much to say that we could not bear the incessant realisation of all that is suggested by the expression “the blood of Christ.” But if this is our weakness, and it surely is, what shall we say of the strengthening might that is stored up for us in Christ? We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us! For observe, that though the painful sacrifice of Christ makes an unendurable strain upon our feelings at one period of our spiritual history, it becomes to us the tenderest solace, the richest grace, the sweetest reflection, and the serenest rest, as we advance in our holy course. No longer are our sensibilities torn by it. No more do we see the wild but passing cruelty of man; the crucifixion becomes an Atonement, and then on the divine side we see the pity, the righteousness, the wisdom, and the love of God, and then can we say—

“ For ever here my rest shall be  
Close to his bleeding side,  
This all my hope and all my plea,  
For me the Saviour died.”

3. The practical effects of realising all that is meant by “the blood of Christ” are most useful. The text ceases to be a mere expression, and becomes a most solemn and all-determining fact. It becomes indeed the regulative power of our whole life. See, for example, how it reduces us to a state of most utter and abject helplessness in the matter of self-salvation! If we could be saved by the shedding of blood only, how could we save ourselves? If Christ had saved us by some lower method, we might have been tempted to think that our redemption lay within our own power. But when it required the outpouring of every drop of blood that was in the fountain of his great heart, either he made a fatal mistake in his method or we make a fatal mistake in supposing that we could have redeemed ourselves. Immediately following this

reflection is the thought that if so much was done for us, what is there that we can do in return? "How much owest thou my Lord?"

"Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

We are not our own; we are bought with a price; therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." My soul, canst thou reckon a debt so immense? Hast thou a pen that can be dipped in a sea of ink and a hand that can wield it until the day of death, that the sum may be set down in the face of heaven? My tongue refuses the intolerable burden of complete acknowledgment. My age would wither away before the growing tale was well begun. I owe all to Christ. There is nothing mine but my hateful sin. He found me; he loosed my bonds; he paid my debt; he sounded the depths of all my woe; he ransomed me with blood! "I will offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the Lord." How poor my best return! How mean my gifts! How weak my service! But as he met me in the helplessness of my sin, so will he meet me in the imperfection of my work. He will make it worthy with his own merit; he will complete it by his own might; he will sanctify it by his own holiness. The blood of Christ! It did not flow on one day, it flows evermore! My soul, is thine but a geographical Calvary; or is it a Golgotha of the spirit, the place where thy church is founded and where thy heaven begins? Have we outlived the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and is the tale of his Cross a sound from which all the music has gone for ever? We need the sun to-day as we have ever needed it; the wind is still the breath of health to our dying bodies; still we find in the earth the bread without which we cannot live; these are our friends of whom we never tire; can it be that the only thing of which we are weary is God's answer to our soul's deepest need? Shall we keep everything but the blood of Christ? Shall the Cross go, and the sun be left? Verily, as the sun withdrew at sight of that Cross and for the moment fled away, he would shine never more were that sacred tree hewn down by furious Man. The blood of

Christ is the fountain of immortality ! The blood of Christ,—it makes the soul's summer warm and beauteous ! The blood of Christ, it binds all heaven, with its many mansions and throngs without number, in holy and indissoluble security ! My soul, seek no other stream in which to drown thy leprosy. My lips, seek no other song with which to charge your music. My hands, seek no other task with which to prove your energy. I would be swallowed up in Christ. I would be nailed to his Cross. I would be baptized with his baptism. I would quail under the agony of his pain that I might triumph with him in the glory of his resurrection. O my Jesus ! My Saviour ! Thine heart did burst for me, and all its sacred blood flowed for the cleansing of my sin. I need it all. I need it every day. I need it more and more. O search out the inmost recesses of my poor wild heart, and let thy blood remove every stain of evil.

“ E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”

Mighty Saviour ! repeat all thy miracles by taking away the guilt and torment of my infinite sin !

## JUDAS ISCARIOT: A STUDY OF CHARACTER.

I T will help me very greatly in my delicate work of examining the character of the betrayer of our Lord, if there be an understanding between us, that it is not presumptuously supposed on either side that every difficulty can be explained, and that perfect unanimity can be secured on every point ; and especially if it be further understood that my object is not to set up or defend any *theory* about Judas Iscariot, but solemnly to inquire whether his character was so absolutely unlike everything we know of human nature as to give us no help in the deeper understanding of our own ; or whether there was not even in Judas something that, at its very worst, was only an exaggeration of elements or forces that may possibly be in every one of us. We always think of him as a monster ; but what if we ourselves be—at least in possibility—as monstrous and as vile ? Let us go carefully through his history, and see. My purpose is to cut a path as straight as I may be able to go, through the entangled and thorny jungle of texts which make up the history of Iscariot. I propose to stop here and there on the road, that we may get new views and breathe perhaps an uncongenial air ; and though we may differ somewhat as to the distance and form of passing objects, I am quite sure that when we get out again into the common highways we shall resume our unanimity, and find it none the less entire and cordial because of what we have seen on the unaccustomed and perilous way. First of all, then, let us try to get a clear knowledge of the character of Judas Iscariot, the disciple, and apostle, and betrayer, of the Son of God.

### I. EXPOSITORY.

“ Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil ? ”  
(John vi. 70).—Who, then, will say that the men with whom

Christ began his new kingdom were more than men,—not bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but a princely sort, specially created and quite away from the common herd in sympathy and aim? He chose twelve men who fairly represented human nature in its best and worst aspects,—they represented gentleness, ardour, domesticity, enterprise, timidity, courage,—and one of them is a devil. Not a devil in the sense of being something else than human. Judas was a man like the others, but in him there was a pre-eminent capacity for plotting and attempting the foulest mischief. We are certainly not to understand that our Lord chose twelve men who, with one exception, were converted, intelligent, sanctified, and perfect; nor is it by any means certain that our Lord chose even the most intellectual and influential men that it was possible for him to draw into his service. I do not know that we are entitled to regard the Apostles as in all respects the twelve best men of their day; but I think we may justly look upon them as an almost complete representation of all sides of human nature. And as such they utterly destroy the theory that they were but a coterie,—men of one mean stamp, without individuality, force, emphasis, or self-assertion; padding, not men; mere shadows of a crafty empiric, and not to be counted as men. On the contrary, this was a representative discipleship; we were all in that elect band; the kingdom of God, as declared in Christ Jesus, would work upon each according to his own nature, and would reveal every man to himself. A very wonderful and instructive thing is this, that Jesus Christ did not point out the supremely wicked man, but merely said, “One of you is a devil.” Thus a spirit of self-suspicion was excited in the whole number, culminating in the mournful “Is it I?” of the last Supper; and truly it is better for us not to know which is the worst man in the church,—to know only that judgment will begin at the house of God, and to be wondering whether that judgment will take most effect upon ourselves. No man fully knows *himself*. Jesus Christ would seem to be saying to us—At this moment you appear to be a child of God: you are reverent, charitable, well-disposed; you have a place in my visible kingdom,—even a prominent place in the pulpit, on the platform, at the desk, in the office; appearances are wholly and strongly in your favour, yet, little as you suspect it, deep under all these things lies an undiscovered *self*—a very

devil, it may be ; so that even *you*, now loud in your loyalty and zealous beyond all others in pompous diligence, may in the long run turn round upon your Lord and thrust a spear into his heart ! —Can it be that the foremost sometimes stumble ? Do the strong cedars fall ? May the very star of the morning drop from the gate of heaven ? Let the veteran, the leader, the hoary Nestor, the soldier valiant beyond all others, say, “Lord, is it I ?” Which of us can positively separate himself from Judas Iscariot and honestly say—His was a kind of human nature different from mine ? I dare not do so. In the betrayer I would have every man see a *possibility* of himself,—himself, it may be, magnified in hideous and revolting exaggeration, yet part of the same earth heaved, in the case of Judas, into a great hill by fierce heat, but on exactly the same plane as the coldest dust that lies miles below its elevation. Iscariot’s was a human sin rather than a merely personal crime. Individually I did not sin in Eden, but humanly I did ; personally I did not covenant for the betrayal of my Lord, but morally I did,—I denied him, and betrayed him, and spat upon him, and pierced him ; and he loved me and gave himself for me !

Of course the question will arise, Why did our Lord choose a man whom he knew to be a devil ? A hard question ; but there is a harder still—Why did Jesus choose *you* ? Could you ever make out *that* mystery ? Was it because of your respectability ? Was it because of the desirableness of your companionship ? Was it because of the utter absence of all devilishness in your nature ? What if Judas did for you what you were only too timid to do for yourself ? The incarnation with a view to human redemption is the supreme mystery ; in comparison with that, every other difficulty is as a molehill to a mountain. In your heart of hearts are you saying, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what manner of man this Judas is, for he is a sinner ?” O thou self-contented Simon, presently the Lord will have somewhat to say unto thee, and his parable will smite thee like a sword.

“The Son of man goeth as it is written of him ; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.”—I think we shall miss the true meaning and pathos of this passage if we regard it merely as the exclamation of a man who was worsted for the moment by

superior strength, but who would get the upper hand by-and-by, and then avenge his humiliation. These words might have been uttered with tears of the heart—Woe will be the portion of that man who betrays me ; yea, woe upon woe, even unto remorse and agony and death ; the chief of sinners, he will also be chief of sufferers ; when he sees the full meaning of what he has done, he will sink under the intolerable shame, he will give blood for blood, and be glad to find solace in death.

And if our hearts be moved at all to pitifulness in the review of this case, may we not find somewhat of a redeeming feature in the capacity for suffering so deep and terrible ? Shall we be stretching the law of mercy unduly if we see in this self-torment a faint light on the skirts of an appalling cloud ? I do not find that Judas professed or manifested any joy in his grim labour ; there is no sound of revel or mad hilarity in all the tragic movement ; on the contrary, there is a significant absence, so far as we can judge from the narrative, of all the excitement needful for nerving the mischievous man to work out purposes which he knows to be wholly evil. All the while, Judas would seem to be under a cloud, to be advancing stealthily rather than boisterously ; he was no excited Belshazzar whose brain was aflame with excess of wine —though he, too, trembled as if the mystic hand were writing letters of doom upon the old familiar scenes : so excited is he that a word will send him reeling backward to the ground, and if he do not his work “ quickly ” he will become sick with fear and be incapable of action ; as it is, he has only bargained to “ kiss ” the Victim, not to clutch him with a ruffian’s grasp. Then came the intolerable woe !

This great law is at work upon our lives to-day. Woe unto the unfaithful pastor ; woe unto the negligent steward ; woe unto the betrayer of sacred interests ; woe unto them that call evil good and good evil ;—to all such be woe ; not only the woe of outward judgment—Divine and inexorable—but that, if may be, still keener, sadder woe of self-contempt and self-damnation. With such sorrow no stranger may intermeddle. The lesson to ourselves would seem to be this—Do not regard Divine judgment merely as measure for measure in relation to your sin,—that is to say, so much penalty for so much guilt ; it is more than that—it is a quickening of the man into holy resentment against himself, an

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arming of the conscience against the whole life, a subjective controversy which will not be lulled into unrighteous peace, but will rage wrathfully and implacably until there shall come repentance unto life or remorse unto death. Shall I startle you if I say that there is a still more terrible state than that of such anguish as Iscariot's? To have worn out the moral sense, to have become incapable of pain, to have the conscience seared as with a hot iron, to be "past feeling,"—*that* is the consummation of wickedness. That there is judicial and outward infliction of pain an account of sin, is of course undoubted; but whilst that outward judgment may actually harden the sinner, the bitter woe which comes of a true estimate of sin and of genuine contrition for its enormity may work out a repentance not to be repented of. If, then, any man is suffering the pain of just self-condemnation on account of sin; if any man's conscience is now rising mightily against him and threatening to tear him in pieces before the Lord, because of secret lapses or unholy betrayals, because of long-sustained hypocrisy or self-seeking faithlessness, I will not hurriedly seek to ease the healthy pain; the fire will work to his purification, and the Refiner will lose nothing of the gold;—but if any man, how eminent soever in ecclesiastical position, knows that he has betrayed the Lord, and conceals under a fair exterior all that Ezekiel saw in the chamber of imagery, and is as a brazen wall against every appeal—hard, fearless, impenetrable, unresponsive—I do not hesitate to say that I would rather be numbered with Judas than with that man.

"It had been good for that man if he had not been born."—Then why was he born? is the question, not of impatient ignorance only, but of a certain moral instinct which God never fails to respect throughout the whole of His intercourse with mankind, and which he will undoubtedly honour in this instance. Take the case as it is ordinarily put: Judas, like the rest of us, had no control over his own birth; he found himself in a world in whose formation he had no share; he was born under circumstances which, as to their literal and local bearing, can never be repeated in all the ages of time. So far as we can gather from the narrative, Jesus spoke to him no word of sympathy, never drew him aside, as he drew Peter, to tell him of preventing prayer, but to all appearance left him to be the blind and helpless instrument of the

devil, and then said, “ It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” This cannot be the full meaning of the words. Instantly we repeat the profound inquiry of Abram, “ Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” He may, and must, transcend our understanding ; he will, by the very nature of the case, dazzle and confound our imagination by the unsuspected riches and glory of his many mansions ; but he must not trouble our sense of *right* if he would retain our homage and our love. Personally, I can have no share in the piety that can see any man condemned under such circumstances as have just been described ; it is not enough to tell me that it is some other man and not myself who suffers,—a suggestion ineffably mean even if it were true ; but it is *not* true ; I *do* suffer : a tremendous strain is put upon my sensibilities, and I cannot, without anguish, see any man arbitrarily driven into hell. Upon his face, writhing in unutterable torture, is written this appeal, “ Can you see me, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, thus treated, weighed down, crushed, damned, by a power I am utterly unable either to placate or resist?” That man may be my own father, my own child, my most familiar friend ; and though he be a stranger, of name unknown, he has at all events the claim of our common humanity upon me. I have purposely put the case in this strong way, that I may say with the more emphasis that I see no such method of government revealed in the narrative now under consideration. If I saw anything like it in any part of the Word of God, I should say, “ My understanding is at fault, not God’s justice ; from what I know of his method within the scope of my own life, I know and am sure that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and that his mercy endureth for ever.” I see things that are mysterious, incomprehensible, baffling ; I come upon scriptures which utterly defy all scholars and interpreters ; but this is the confidence that I have—“ *the Judge of all the earth will do right.*” As to the particular expression in the text, two things may be said : first, it is well known that the Jews were in the habit of saying, “ It had been good for that man had he not been born,”—it was a common expression of the day, in speaking of transgressors, and did not by any means imply a belief in the final destruction or damnation of the person spoken of ; and secondly, *this passage has again and again exactly expressed*

*our own feeling in many crises of our own life* : it must be for ever true that non-existence is better than sinfulness. When the lie was on our lips, when part of the price was laid down as the whole, when we dishonoured the vow we made in secret with God, when we rolled iniquity under our tongue as a sweet morsel, —at *that* time it had been good for us if we had not been born. Such, indeed, is the only form of words equal to the gravity of the occasion ;—better we say, again and again, not to have been born than to have done this ; if this be the end of our being, then has our life been a great failure and a mortal pain. I hold that these words were spoken not so much of Judas the *man* as of Judas the *sinner*, and that consequently they apply to all evil-doers throughout all generations, and are in reality the most tender and pathetic admonition which even Christ could address to the slaves of sin.

We may get some light upon this expression by considering the fact that “it repented the Lord that He had made man.” In studying all such passages we must have regard to the order of time. St. Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable ;”—so, if we break off our own life at certain points, we shall say the same thing of ourselves ; and if we interrupt human history, so that one fact shall not be allowed to explain another, it would be easy to find sections which would prove alike the disorder and malignity of the Divine government. We know what this means in some of the works of our own hands. Thus, for example : You undertook to build a house for the Lord, and your heart was full of joy as you saw the sacred walls rising in your hopeful dreams ; but when you came to work out your purpose, you came upon difficulty after difficulty,—promises were broken, contracts were trifled with, the very stars in their courses seemed to fight against you, and at length, after many disappointments and exasperations, you said, “It repents me ; it gives me pain, it grieves me, that I began this house.” Such is the exact state of your feeling at that particular moment. But other influences were brought to bear upon the situation, resources equal to the difficulty were developed, and when the roof covered the walls, and the spire shot up into the clouds, you forgot your pains and tears in a great satisfaction. You will say that God foresaw all the difficulty of rebuilding the living temple of manhood, that the

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whole case was clearly before him from eternity ; that is, of course true ; but the pain of ingratitude is none the less keen because the ingratitude itself was foreknown. Take the case of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, as an illustration ; he foresaw all the triumphs of his cross—all heaven thronged with innumerable multitudes out of every kindred and people and tongue—yet he prayed that the cup might pass from him, and he needed an angel to help him in the time of his soul's sorrow. In magnifying God's omniscience we must not overlook God's love ; nothing, indeed, could surprise his foreknowledge, yet it grieved him at the heart that he had made man ; and he called upon the heavens to hear, and upon the earth to be astonished, because his children had rebelled against him !

“ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”—It is more to the credit of the Apostles themselves that this should be regarded as an after-thought than as an undoubted conviction, or an established fact, at the time that Judas sat with them at the Paschal Supper, or even at the time that he asked why the ointment was not sold for the benefit of the poor. This is the more evident from the fact that the writer indicates Judas as the betrayer, whereas at the moment of the test his identity was not established. There is no mystery about the insertion of this explanatory suggestion, for we all know how easy it is *after* a character has fully revealed itself to go back upon its separate acts and account for them by their proper motives—motives unknown at the time of the action, but plainly proved by subsequent revelations of character. This was probably the case in the instance before us : else why did the disciples allow Judas to keep the bag ? Why did they not humble and exhaust him by an incessant protest against his dishonesty ? And why did not our Lord, instead of mildly expostulating, say to Judas as he once said to Peter, “ Get thee behind me, Satan ? ” Here, then, is a great law within whose operation we ourselves may be brought,—the law of reading the part in the light of the whole, and of judging the isolated act by the standard of the complete character. Illustrations of the working of this law will occur to you instantly. Let a man eventually reveal himself as having unworthily filled prominent positions in

the Church—let his character be proved to have been corrupt, and then see what light is thrown upon words and deeds which at the time were not fully understood. How abundant then will be such expressions as these in recounting his utterances :—

“ He advised prudence and care and very great caution in working out Church plans ; he counselled concentration ; he deprecated romantic schemes : this he did (as we *now* can see), not that he was a lover of Prudence or a worshipper of Wisdom, but because he was a thief, and he feared that bold and noble schemes would shame him into reluctant generosity.”

“ He urged that the church should be built with the least possible decoration or ornament ; he spoke strongly against coloured glass and elaborate enrichment : and this he did (as we can *now* see), not that he was devoted to Simplicity or absorbed in spiritual aspiration, but because he was a thief, and feared that every block of polished marble would increase the sum which his respectability would be expected to subscribe.

“ He denounced all heretical tendencies in the Christian ministry ; he knew heterodoxy afar off ; he never ceased to declare himself in favour of what he supposed to be the Puritan theology : and this he did, not that in his heart of hearts he cared for the conservation of orthodoxy, but because he was a thief, and had a felonious intent upon the reputation of independent thinkers whose shoe’s lachet he was not worthy to unloose.”

All this comes out *after* a man has revealed himself as Judas did. But let me also say that the “ thief ” may be dictating our speech even when we least suspect it, certainly where there may never be such a disclosure as there was in the case of Judas. There are conditions under which we hardly know what influence it is that colours our judgment and suggests our course,—may it not be the “ thief ” thus underlies our consciousness, and so cunningly touches our life as never to excite our suspicion or our fear ? We know how subtle are the workings of self-deception, and perhaps even the godliest of us would be surprised to know exactly the inspiration of some of our most fervent speeches,—surprised to find that though the outward orator seemed to be an earnest man, the inner and invisible speaker is the “ thief ” that prompted Judas ! Who, then, can stand before the Lord, or be

easy in the presence of his holy law? It is under such inquiries that the strongest man quails, and that the swiftest of God's messengers humbly prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified."

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" (Matt. xxvi. 14, 15). Why should there have been any bargaining or why should these have been any difficulty about the arrest of Christ? We must look to an earlier verse for the solution. The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, had met for consultation in the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas, and the principal question was, not how they might take Jesus, but how they might take him "by subtilty," by craft, deceit, guile, as if they would have secretly murdered him if they could,—murdered him in the darkness, and in the morning have wiped their mouths as innocent men! Judas would appear to have gone to them secretly, and offered himself as one who knew the haunts and times and methods of Christ; and in doing so he showed the weak and vicious side of his nature, his covetousness, his greed, his love of money,—and herein his guilt seems to culminate in an aggravation infernal and unpardonable. But are we ourselves verily clear in this matter? Are we not every day selling Christ to the highest bidder? When we stifle our convictions lest we should lose a morsel of bread; when we are dumb in the presence of the enemy lest our words should be followed by loss of domestic comfort or personal honour; when we soften our speech, or hide the Cross, or join in ungodly laughter that we may avoid an ungodly sneer, we are doing our own way the very thing which we rightly condemn in the character of Judas.

"Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood: and he cast down the silver pieces in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matt. xxvii. 3-5). Is there not a tone in these words with which we are familiar? Is there not, indeed, something of

our own voice in this mournful story? Let us look at it carefully:—

“When he *saw*,”—that, at least, is familiar! Not until our actions are set a little off do we see all their relations and all their meaning; in their progress we are too near them to get their full effect; if we take but one step back we shall be affrighted by the very actions of which the doing gave us a kind of frenzied joy. We make our own ghosts. We shut the eyes of our minds whilst we are doing certain things; and when the last touch is given to the deed, we are taught by the bitterness of experience that Temptation destroys our sight and that Guilt restores it. Recall the case of Adam and Eve,—“And the eyes of them both were opened!” Very short and cloudy is the sight of the body: how keen, how piercing, is the sight of a self-convicted soul! Before that discerning vision the air is full of eyes, and the clearest of all days is dark with menaces and gathering thunders.

“When he saw that he was *condemned*.”—At that moment the surprise of Judas himself was supreme and unutterable: evidently he did not expect that this catastrophe would supervene; he may, indeed, have said to himself—as a man of inventive and daring mind would be likely to say—I am quite sure, from what I have seen of his miracles, that he will prove himself more than a match for all his enemies; he has done so before, and he will do it again; they said they would cast him down from the brow of the hill, but he went through the midst of them like a beam of light, and when they took up stones to stone him, their hands were held fast by that strong will of his; he has provoked them to their face, heaped up all their sins before them, taunted and goaded them to madness, and yet he held them in check and played with them as he listed: it will be so again; besides, he may just want a plan like mine to bring things to a point; I will put him into the hands of these men, then will he shake them off, proclaim his kingdom, drive away the spoiler from the land of the Hebrews, and we shall come into the enjoyment of our promised reward.—Judas may not have used these words, but in effect they are being used by sinners every day! This is the universal tongue of self-deception, varying a little, it may be, in the accent, but in substance the same all the world over; a putting of one thing against

another, a balancing of probabilities, an exercise of self-outwitting cunning ; a secret hope that something can be snatched out of the fire, and that the flames can be subdued without undue damage,—this is the method of sinfulness of heart, a method confounded every day by the hand of God, yet every day coming up again to fresh attempts and renewed humiliations.

— “ When he saw that he was condemned he *repented* himself.”— Is there not hope of a man who is capable of any degree of repentance, even when repentance takes upon itself the darker shade of horror and remorse ? I know what the word is which is translated “ repented,” and I remember with joy that it is the word which is used of the son who said he would not go, and afterwards *repented* and went ; it is the word which Paul used of himself on one occasion in writing to the Corinthians. But even if the word be rendered “ was filled with remorse and shame and despair,” I should say, “ So much the better for Judas.” Under such circumstances I should have more hope of a man who had absolutely no hope of himself, than of a man who could sufficiently control himself to think that even such a sin—infinite in wickedness as it must have appeared to his own mind—could ever be forgiven. It is easy for us who never experienced the agony to say what Judas ought to have done : how he ought to have wept and prayed and sought forgiveness as we now should seek it,—we cannot intermeddle with his sorrow, nor ought we harshly to judge the method of his vengeance.

“ I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.”— Not, “ I was hurried into this by others ;” not, “ Others are as much to blame as I am ;” but, “ I did it, and I alone.” Not, “ I have made a mistake ;” not, “ This is a great error on my part ;” but, “ I have sinned,”—the very word which he might have heard in his Lord’s parable of the Prodigal Son,—the word which our Father in heaven delights to hear ! “ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, for his mercy endureth for ever.” “ If thy brother turn again, saying, I repent, forgive him ;”—Judas repented himself ! “ How often shall I forgive him ? Seven times. Seventy times seven ! ” And shall I forgive him the less because his repentance has deepened into remorse, and he has lost all hope of himself ? Surely the more on that very account. And if he slay himself because of his sin

against me? Then must I think of him with still tenderer pity, nor cloud his memory with a single suspicion. And here let me say, as to the spiritual application of this matter, I have no faith in the moral value of fine-drawn distinctions between repentance and despair; my belief is that until we reach the point of self-despair as to our sin against Christ, we can never know the true meaning or realize the true joy of repentance. That Judas should have slain himself with his own hand is, in my view of the case, wholly in his favour. It must have appeared to him, indeed, to be the only course open to him; floods of tears he could never set against the blood of an innocent man; to cry and moan and weep bitterly, would be just to aggravate the appalling crime. With a stronger light beating on our life than ever Judas was permitted to enjoy, guarded by all the restraints of Christian civilization, living under the ministry of the Holy Ghost, we are by so much unable to sympathize with the intolerable horror which destroyed the self-control of the Betrayer of our Lord. So far as I can think myself back into the mental condition of Judas, his suicide seems to me to be the proper completion of his insufferable self-reproach. And yet that self-control was preserved long enough to enable Judas Iscariot to utter the most effective and precious eulogium ever pronounced upon the character of Jesus Christ. How brief, how simple, how complete—"innocent blood!" If the proper interpretation of words is to be found, as it undoubtedly is, in circumstances, then these two words are fuller in meaning and tenderer in pathos than the most laboured encomium could possibly be. Consider the life which preceded these words, and you will see that they may be amplified thus: "I know Jesus better than any of you can know him; you have only seen him in public, I have lived with him in private; I have watched his words as words of man were never watched before; I have heard his speeches meant for his disciples alone; I have seen him in poverty, weariness, and pain of heart; I have heard his prayers at home; I trusted that it had been he who would have redeemed Israel from patriotic servility; I curse myself, I exonerate him,—his is innocent blood!" How glad would the Jews have been if Christ had been witnessed against by one of his own disciples! They would have welcomed his evidence; no gold could have adequately paid for testimony so direct and important; and Judas

loved gold. Yet the holy truth came uppermost ; Judas died not with a lie in his right hand, but with the word of truth upon his lips, and the name of Christ was thus saved from what might have been its deepest wound.

“ Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.”—At the first glance these words would seem to put the fate of Judas Iscariot beyond all controversy, yet further consideration may show how mercy may magnify itself even in this cloud. Judas is called “ the son of perdition ;” true, and Peter himself was called *Satan* by the same Lord. And if Judas was “ the son of perdition,” what does Paul say of all mankind ? Does he not say, “ We are by nature *the children of wrath*, even as others ?” But in this case “ the son of perdition ” is said to be “ lost ;” but does the word *lost* necessarily imply that he was in hell ? “ We have all erred and strayed like *lost* sheep ;” “ the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was *lost* ;” and, “ there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented [Judas repented himself], more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.” It is our joy to believe that wherever repentance is possible, mercy is possible ; and it is heaven to us to know that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And are we *quite* sure that there is no ray of hope falling upon the repentant and remorseful Judas from such words as these : “ And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me [and that he gave him Iscariot is clear from the very passage we are now considering] I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day ” (John vi. 39) ? But there is still more light to be thrown on this great gloom. Take this passage (John xviii. 8, 9), “ Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he : if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way ; that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me I have lost none.” Now suppose that the ruffians had answered, “ No, we will not let these go their way ; we will slay them with the sword at once,”—would it follow that Jesus Christ had *lost* his disciples in the sense of their having been destroyed in unquenchable fire ? The suggestion is not to be entertained for a moment, yet this is the very “ saying ” which is supposed to deter-

mine the damnation of Judas ! As I read the whole history, I cannot but feel that our Lord was specially wistful that his disciples should *continue* with him throughout his temptation, should *watch* with him, that in some way, hardly to be expressed in words, they should help him by the sympathy of their *presence*,—in this sense he was anxious to “lose none ;” but he did lose the one into whom Satan had entered, and he refers to him not so much for his own sake as that he may rejoice the more in the constancy of those who remained. But the whole reference, as it seems to me, is not to the final and eternal state of men in the unseen world, but to continuance and steadfastness in relation to a given crisis.

“ This ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place ” (Acts i. 25).—One reputable scholar has suggested that the words “ go to his own place ” may refer to Matthias, and not to Judas ; but the suggestion does not commend itself to my judgment. I think we should lose a good deal by accepting this interpretation. I hold that this is an instance of exquisite delicacy on the part of Peter : no judgment is pronounced ; the fall is spoken of only as official and as involving official results, and the sinner himself is left in the hands of God. It is in this spirit that Peter speaks of Judas :—

“ Owning his weakness,  
His evil behaviour,  
And leaving with meekness  
His sins to his Saviour.”

## II. PRACTICAL.

Such a study as this can hardly fail to be fruitful of suggestion to the nominal followers of Christ in all ages. What are its lessons to ourselves,—to ourselves as Christians, ministers, office-bearers, and stewards of heavenly mysteries ?

1. Our first lesson will be found in the fact that when our Lord said to his disciples, “ One of you shall betray me,” every one of them began to say “ Is it I ? ” Instead of being shocked even to indignation, each of the disciples put it to himself as a possibility ;

“ It *may* be I ; Lord, *is* it I ? ” This is the right spirit in which to hold all our privileges. We should regard it as a *possibility* that the strongest may fail, and even the oldest may betray his trust. “ Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Do you suppose that there was but *one* betrayal of the Lord once for all, and that the infamous crime can never be repeated ? “ I tell you, nay ! ” There are predictions yet to be realized—“ There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them ;”—“ Lord, is it I ? ” It shall surely be more tolerable for Judas Iscariot in the day of judgment than for that man ! Living in the light of Gospel day ; professing to have received the Holy Ghost ; ordained as a minister of the Cross ; holding office in the Christian Church ;—is it impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame ? “ Lord, is it I ? ” “ In the last days perilous times shall come : men shall be TRAITORS,”—“ Lord, is it I ? ” Governing our life by this self-misgiving spirit, not thinking all men sinful but ourselves, we shall be saved from the boastfulness which is practical blasphemy, and our energy shall be kept from fanaticism by the chastening influence of self doubt. Looking upon all the mighty men who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience—Adam, Saul, Solomon, Judas—let us be careful lest after having preached to others we ourselves should be cast away. It is true that we cannot repeat the literal crime of Judas, but there are greater enormities than his ! We can outdo Judas in sin ! “ Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come” (Matt. xii. 32). We cannot sell the body, but we can grieve the Spirit ! There can be no more covenanting over the Lord’s bones, but we can plunge a keener spear into his heart than that which drew forth blood and water from his side ; we cannot nail him to the accursed tree, but we can pierce him through with many sorrows. Judas died by the vengeance of his own hand ; of how much sorcer

punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace ? Judas shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because when he saw the error of his ways he repented himself, and made restitution of his unholy gains : but we have rolled iniquity under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we have held our places in the sanctuary while our heart has been the habitation of the enemy ! It will be a fatal error on our part if we suppose that human iniquity reached its culmination in the sin of Judas, and that after his wickedness all other guilt is contemptible in magnitude and trivial in effect. Jesus Christ teaches another doctrine : he points to a higher crime,—that higher crime, the sin against the Holy Ghost, he leaves without specific and curious definition that out of its possibility may come a continual fear, and a perpetual discipline. Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption !

2. Our second lesson is a caution against mere intellectual sagacity in directing the affairs of the Christian kingdom. It is admitted on all hands that Judas Iscariot was far ahead of the other apostles in many intellectual qualities, yet “ Judas by transgression fell.” How self-controlled he was, how stealthy was his step, how lingering and watchful his cunning ! And if Whately and De Quincey be right in the suggestion that he merely wanted to force the Lord to declare Himself the Prince of princes and make Israel glad by despoiling the oppressor, it discovers the instinct of statesmanship, and shows how his strategic ambition sought to ensnare the Roman fowler in his own net. Judas is supposed to have reasoned thus with himself : This Jesus is he who will redeem Israel ; the whole twelve of us think so ; yet he hesitates, for some reason we cannot understand ; his power is astounding, his life is noble ; this will I do, I will bring things to a crisis by going to the authorities and making them an offer ; I believe they will snatch at my proposition, and when they come to work it out he will smite them with his great power, and will avenge the insult by establishing his supremacy as King and Lord of Israel.—As a matter of fact we know that this kind of reasoning has played no small part in the history of the Church. The spiritual kingdom of Christ has suffered severely at the hands of men

who have been proud of their own diplomacy and generalship ; men fond of elaborating intricate organisations, of playing one influence against another, and of making up for the slowness of time by dramatic surprises alike of sympathy and collision. It is for this reason that I cannot view without alarm the *possible misuse* of congresses, conferences, unions, and councils : these institutions will only be of real service to the cause of the Cross in proportion as *spiritual* influence is supreme ;—once let political sagacity, diplomatic ingenuity, and official adroitness in the management of details become unduly valued, and you change the centre of gravity, and bring the Church into imminent peril. Unquestionably human nature loves dexterity, and will pay high prices for all kinds of conjuring, and loudly applaud the hero who does apparent impossibilities ; and from this innate love of mere cleverness may come betrayals, compromises, and casuistries, which crucify the Son of God afresh. Judas looked to the end to vindicate if not to sanctify the means ; and this is the policy of all dexterous managers, the very soul of Jesuitry, and a chosen instrument of the devil. I do not pray for a leader, fertile in resource, supple and prompt in movement ; my prayer is for a man of another stamp, even for an *Inspirer*, who, by the ardour of his holiness, the keenness of his spiritual insight, and the unction of his prayer, shall help us truthward and heavenward ; and under his leadership we shall hear no more about secularities and temporalities, but every action—the opening of the doors and the lighting of the lamps of the sanctuary—shall be done by hands which were first outstretched in prayer. Not the crafty Judas, but the loving John will help us best in all our work ; not the man inexhaustible in tricks of management, but the man of spiritual intelligence and fervour, will deliver us most successfully in the time of straits and dangers. Managers, leaders, draughtsmen, and pioneers, we shall of course never cease to want, and their abilities will always be of high value to every good cause ; yet one thing is needful above all others—closeness to the dear Lord, and daily continuance in prayer.

## EPILOGUE.

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### LARGER DEFINITIONS.

BECAUSE certain people had given Jesus Christ bread when he was hungry, drink when he was thirsty, and clothing when he was naked, and because they had called upon him when he was sick, and visited him when he was in prison, therefore they were called to enter into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. That is one side of the context. And because other people had omitted to do the whole of these things, they were pronounced accursed, and sent away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. That is the other and completing aspect of the case. Then the conditions of entering into the kingdom prepared for good people from the foundation of the world are exceedingly simple, and the conditions upon which people are rejected from that kingdom, are, apparently, at least, most insufficient and inequitable. Because you have given a loaf to a beggar, thrown an out-worn garment upon the shoulders of some shivering pauper, and have done both things so carelessly as actually to have forgotten that you had ever done them, therefore you may enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, and be happy in the enjoyment of eternal life. This, perhaps, you could understand, acknowledging the simplicity of the case, and wondering much concerning that simplicity. But you could not so well and comfortably comprehend the other side of the case—namely, that because a man has not given a loaf or a garment, therefore he should go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and into everlasting punishment, a state typified by the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. If you read that in the newspaper, you would say this is unjust : if any magistrate in England

attempted to do anything of this kind, the whole country would rise in moral indignation and rebellion against injustice so monstrous and aggravated.

Thus we are brought into a very critical condition of mind in relation to this text. Nothing can be simpler than the terms : there is no long word here within whose tortuous scope men may wriggle and make mistakes, and come to false conclusions. This part of the Testament might be cut out as an elementary lesson for young readers. It becomes, therefore, of supreme importance that we should really understand this matter, lest some of us should be trusting false refuges in relation to the coming of the kingdom, and others should be so infinitely distressed by a sense of injustice at the very outset as to be utterly discouraged from making any attempts at a lofty and noble life. What is to be done ? You have to do here what you have to do along the whole line of the Christian kingdom : if you will do it, you are equal to every emergency, triumphant in every controversy, and perfectly at rest regarding the equitability and benevolence of the divine rule of mankind. What you have to do is to enlarge the terms. Observe, I will not have a word changed : I call for expansion of meaning, for the natural development of the words, for enlargement of definition, and then God's providence is illuminated and commended for its justice and nobleness, and for the very necessity of those principles which it elevates and enforces and honours with final and complete vindication. The Christian faith is to take its place amid all the controversies of the times, by changing nothing essential, touching nothing vital, but by enlarging its terms so as to comprehend all unsuspecting occurrences, all startling accidents, all varieties of the highest and most urgent thinking of the times.

If you take the word *hunger*, you naturally limit it to the demands of the physical appetite. A child will tell you what hunger means : ask your least child who can speak, what do we give to people who are hungry, and the child will say " Bread." That is only the beginning of the definition, and the difficulty I have with many persons in the study of this divine kingdom, is that having got the alphabet, you cannot get them into the construction and combination of syllables. They will hang on by the mere alphabet, and therefore what is their Christianity ? A

rattle of letters, not high, resonant, infinite music. Is the child's definition of hunger correct? It is perfectly correct as far as it goes—but what is hunger? Many a man has risen from a king's feast hunger-bitten, with a thirst unquenchable burning in him. How so? Have the viands been insufficient? Nothing of the kind; the startled table groaned under the load of luxury. Were the wines few or poor? Nay, vintages are poured out through the channels of that banquet-room. What was wanting? Bread for a keener hunger, water for an unappeasable thirst. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine upon the land: not a famine of bread nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." We have all been amply satisfied with our morning repast: there is no man here, probably, with a craving hunger within him, which he at all events has not the means of appeasing. Yet it is possible that the richest man amongst us, the man that has left a table loaded that he might return to a table still more laden—it is possible that even *such* a man may know "the curse of a high spirit, famishing because all earth but sickens it." Now that we are throwing out the meanings thus legitimately, so as to take in the whole line of human want, we begin to *enlarge* the terms of the trial, so as to meet the terms of the award.

First then, in reference to the giving of actual bread—bread as usually understood. Most unquestionably there is a distinct reference to that gift: that is the very basis of the judgment: that is the initial and necessary line of the whole movement—for if you would not give natural and ordinary bread, you would not give the higher necessaries to the hunger and the thirst of mankind. Imagine not, therefore, that I am liberating any man from the responsibility of giving natural bread to natural hunger: that must be assumed initially, intermediately, and finally — no change or modification can be allowed there. If you ask me to justify the enlargement of my terms, I justify the enlargement by a reference to your own experience and your own consciousness. The word hunger is variously used in Holy Scripture, as is the word thirst. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Let us visit this man, sitting on his velvet cushion upon his luxurious carpet, with his hand upon a bell which, touched, will bring a hundred servants around him, with

pictures, horses, and large estates, and gold hardly to be counted. Happy man? Never has one moment's happiness. Satisfied? Burning with an intolerable hunger and thirst. What wants he? You must find that out. He wants one word of love, one assurance of sympathy, one breath of condolence, one prayer of intercession—he hungers to know himself: he says, “I cannot tell what I am, what I feel; I am tormented, distressed: I feel in my heart an aching void.” If you would sit down beside that man, and break the bread of the Kingdom of Heaven to him, and give him to drink of the water of which Christ said, if a man drink he shall never thirst again, you would leave that man behind you satisfied, delighted, thankful; you would have come within the sweep of the infinite meaning of this marvellous passage. To satisfy the hunger of men is to be on the way to the approval of heaven.

Let us visit another soul amply supplied with all things material and temporal—a man to whom you can do no favour in the ordinary sense of that term. He has more than he can eat and drink of a physical kind: his house is large enough, his resources are more than abundant, they are redundant to the utmost plentifullness. If you gave him more gold he would not know that you had given it to him. What can we do for this man? Listen to him. He is the victim of superstition, of narrow notions, of false ideas, of bigoted conceptions, of sectarian sympathies: he is in prison, his soul is in bondage. Reveal the truth to him, show him how little he has yet seen, teach him how to take up his stakes and put them further out, how to lengthen his cords, take in more roofage, give him a peep over boundaries that have already shut him in—what have you done to that man? You found him in prison, you opened the door and sent him into a wide and glorious and incorruptible liberty. We have never been in prison, in the ordinary sense of the term, and, therefore, I contend we must not have the Kingdom of Heaven shut up within a few terms that are necessarily limited: we must find for the limited word an illimitable meaning, and thus the Kingdom of Heaven shall overlap the kingdom of earth, and the greater shall include the less.

If we make a third call, the case will be still more complete. It shall be upon a person who has gone the round of the whole

scheme of things in society—a man who has drunk every cup, tasted to exhaustion every enjoyment, who has had men-servants and women-servants, and the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all sorts, gardens, and pools of water—who has been in the giddy swirl and riot of conventional happiness, gone through it all, and set down the drained goblet with a curse. “What are you, sir?” I say to this man, who has passed the whole round of earthly and sensual delights. He says, “I am sick, sated, nauseated, poisoned.” Will you take again the goblet you have set down? Never. What ails thee? Sickness—death. Ah! let me speak to thee: there is another world, a faith-world, where souls live, where Hope rekindles her lamp, where the spirit can be satisfied; where ideas are enlarged, and answered by ever-completing revelations, a kingdom thou hast never been in, bread thou hast never eaten, water thou hast never tasted. The king of the fair land sends me to thee, sick one, and dead, and says, “Compel him to come in.” Wilt come? He says, “Will you take me?” I answer, “I will.” He says, “I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned: there is nothing on thy side to be accounted for, explained or justified, the burden is on me and on me alone.” He goes: his sickness is forgotten: a new and healthy appetite stirs every faculty of his nature. He was sick and in prison—you visited him—so you have enlarged the number of the guests that throng the house of the Saviour.

I begin now, with these incidents before me, to see that the upshot of this, if ever it came to a great Assize, must be very solemn; for this hunger was no passing appetite, this thirst was no flake of fire that could be put out with a drop of water, this nakedness was no exposure of the skin, this sickness was no affection of the physical functions. It was a hunger of the soul, and a thirst of the spirit, and a nakedness of the whole nature, and the whole head was sick, and the whole heart was faint; and if you can find a man who can answer these necessities and destitutions, you will find a man worthy of a kingdom, be it infinite in measurement, be it lasting as eternity; you will indeed deserve the “Well done,” which is Heaven.

The other side of the case is thus abundantly provided for.

The difficulty of everlasting punishment is now no difficulty at all, but a necessity. For what would the case be then—who are they that go away? According to the terms set forth in the Scripture before us, as enlarged according to human experience and consciousness, there are people who have done nothing, answered no cry of the spirit, appeased no desire of the soul, healed no affection of the conscience, thrown no light of liberty upon the judgment of men, neglected every one, answered no prayers, heeded no cries, satisfied no wants—my friends, to what can they go? When the solemn answer comes, “To everlasting punishment,” the conscience says, “Severe, but right.” The hunger of the universe for uprightness and justice is answered and satisfied in that going away. I believe in everlasting punishment. I cannot define it, nor will I have any ordinary human definition thrust upon me. I only know this, that it must be something fearful beyond the imagination of man to conceive. It is not everlasting because it continues three hundred centuries rather than three hundred days. That is a question of time: everlasting is a quality as well as a quantity. Eternal is more than duration, it is duration forgotten, duration sunk in an agony or delight. Joy has no time, misery has nothing but time.

How large the field of service is: hunger, thirst, nakedness, sickness, imprisonment, destitution of every kind—there is room enough in that field for your talent and mine, and the resources of the individual and the whole commonwealth. Find your corner—work it well. If it be the giving of natural bread, God bless you—it is much needed. If it be the giving of ideas, God bless you—they are the true bread which cometh down from heaven. If it be the giving of sympathy, God bless you—it is wanted, for the sick heart dies of the poisoned confections of time. It is just the field Christ himself occupied; Jesus Christ has written his own history in these words: he did nothing else for three years than what he describes the righteous as having done in these verses—he went about doing good. If the people were hungry he said, “Give them to eat.” If they were thirsty of spirit, feeling the keen necessities of the heart, he sat down upon the mountain and opened his mouth and taught them. If they were deluded, victimized, ensnared by temptations,

traditions, and if they were befooled and misled by incompetent teachers, he liberated them from their prison of inadequate perceptions and perverted ideas and introduced them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

This leads me to say that no man can occupy this field *except in Christ's spirit*. It is not an inviting field : no man goes to the hospital for a day of recreation, he goes to teach, to heal, to mitigate pain. No man would go to the lunatic asylum for the purpose of spending a half-holiday. He goes to see if anything can be done, if any poor wretch can yet be saved from the outermost, —and as he goes in the angels sing “Glory to God in the highest : on earth peace and good will towards men.” If you have not Christ's spirit, you soon tire of dealing with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned, miserable. There is nothing in these things themselves to fascinate the taste, to engage the affections, to conciliate the esteem and fire the energy of the human heart. These things are repulsive in themselves ; unless we get the right view they will shock us and affright us and repel us, and we shall seek health and beauty and plenty and freedom, and call these things our delights.

So then the case is not so simple as you at first thought it to be. It is not the thrusting a loaf into the hands of a beggar and therefore going to Heaven. It is not a sinful life for seventy years, and then calling in some poor wretch off the streets and giving him a goblet of water, and then saying, “There now, I am going straight up to glory.” I thought it must be deeper than that : I felt that that was wrong : I know it now. What has the Christian teacher done this morning—changed a single word ? Not one. Altered the venue ? Not for a moment. Rewritten the Bible ? Not a verse of it. What then ? What every Christian expositor and every Christian controversialist must do : then he will take the spoil from mighty kings : he must enlarge his definitions, thrust out his terms to their full signification, and he will find that the kingdom of heaven is wide enough to include all science, all politics, all hunger, all thirst, all misery, all need—that it is a kingdom of kingdoms, as its Lord is King of kings.

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